



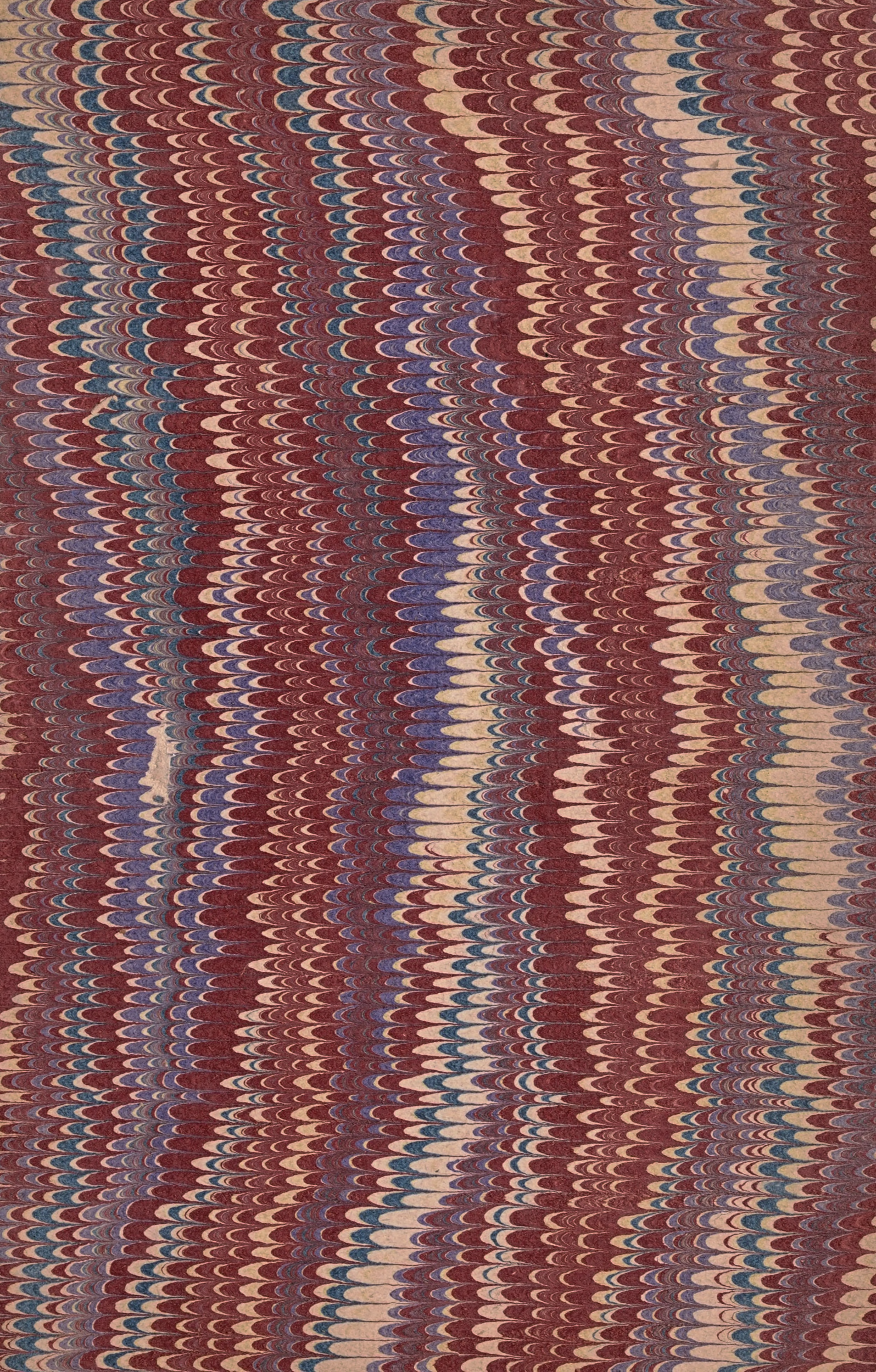
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De



IT WAS MR. TULL
(See page 86)

Harry Ambler

AND

How he Saved the Homestead

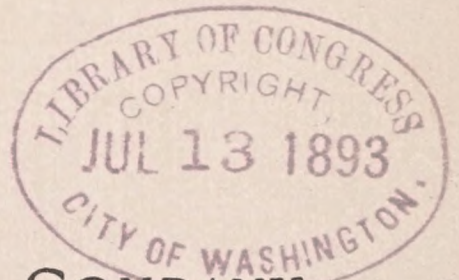
BY

Paschal Heston Coggins

Sidney Marlow *pseud*

"And ever the truth comes uppermost"

PHILADELPHIA
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1893



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TO
Albert H. Coggins

and

Herbert L. Coggins

This book is affectionately dedicated

BY THE AUTHOR

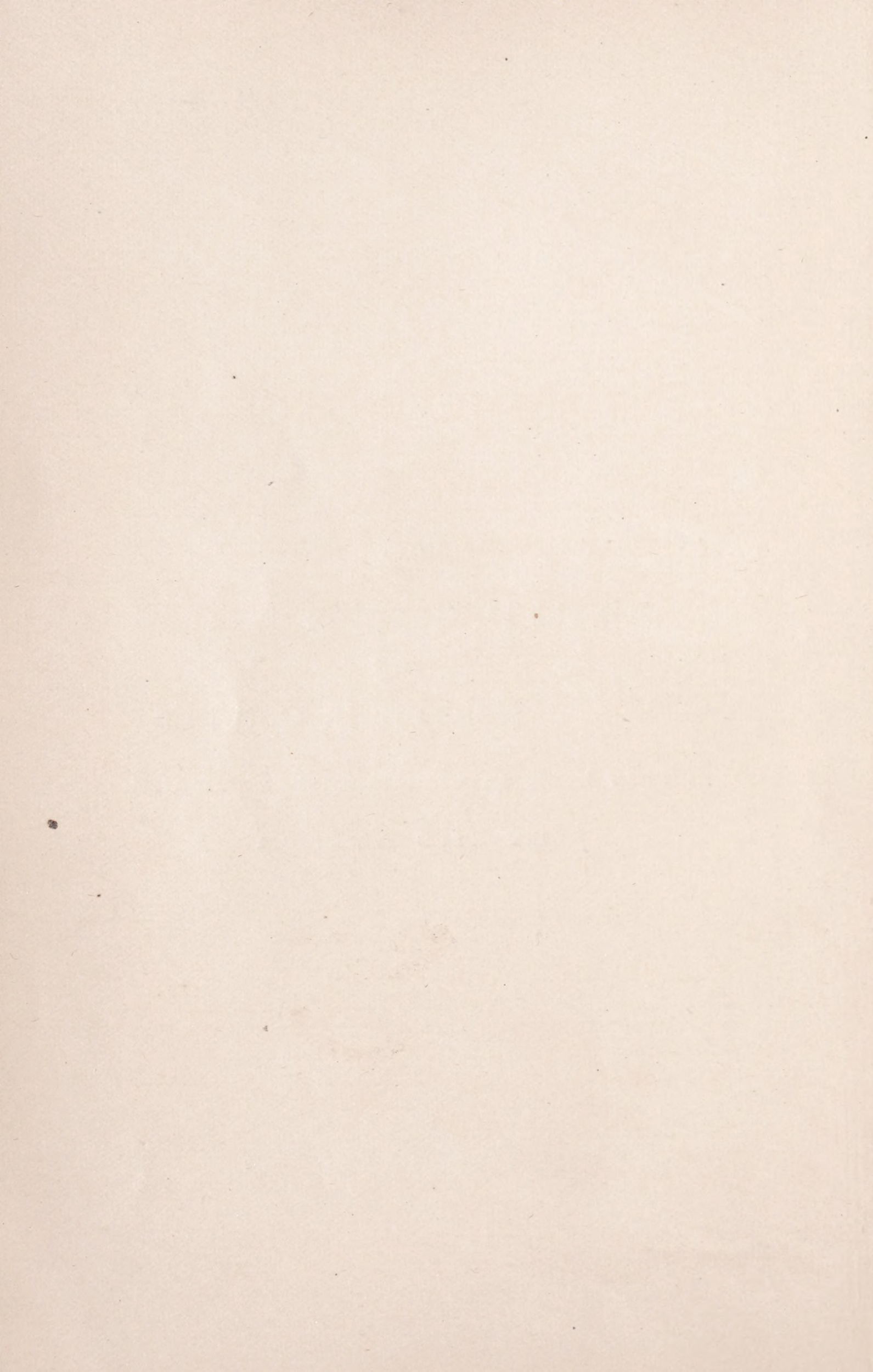


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HARRY AMBLER

CHAPTER I

MRS. AMBLER'S DISTRESS

“WHAT on earth is this?”

Nellie Ambler dropped the cloth with which she was dusting the furniture of the little room, and stooped to pick up the object which had caused her surprise. It was a piece of writing-paper, carefully folded, without an envelope, but addressed on the outside to “Mrs. Parker Ambler, widow.”

“Where did you get it, Nellie?” asked her mother, who had entered the room just in time to hear her daughter’s expression of surprise.

“Right here on the floor. Somebody must have pushed it under the door,” and with this last thought in her mind, the girl stepped to the door and opened it. “Oh, I see through it now. There goes Ned Tull out the lane.

He left it, of course. Why, mother, what is it?"

There was alarm in the daughter's voice as she asked the last question. When Mrs. Ambler entered the room Nellie had handed her the paper, and while she was looking out the window the mother had opened and read the notice. As, a second later, Nellie turned, she saw her mother supporting herself with one hand upon the back of a chair, while in the other she tightly grasped the mysterious paper. She was unusually pale.

"It's about the rent, Nellie, but don't be frightened on my account," as she noticed the alarm in the other's face.

Nellie took the paper from her mother's hand and read it aloud.

"TULL'S CROSSING, March 28, 1876.

Mrs. Parker Ambler.

MADAM:—Three months' rent for the premises now occupied by you, will be due and payable on the 30th day of March, 1876. You are hereby notified that unless said rent, amounting to seventy-five dollars (\$75), is paid upon that day, I shall upon the following day resume possession of said premises, as provided in the lease signed by your late husband.

Respectfully yours,

JEREMIAH TULL, Owner."

The mother and daughter gazed at each other in silence for a moment, then the latter spoke :

“No wonder Ned Tull didn't care to see us.”

“It is certainly very harsh under the circumstances,” said Mrs. Ambler, speaking more quietly than at first.

“This is Tuesday, and I don't know where to look for help within two days. He surely could have afforded to give us a little longer time.”

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a boy of about fifteen years of age. His resemblance to the others told of the near relationship that existed between the three.

His manner, like their own, was unusually quiet. The recent death of father and husband had left its mark upon the little household.

“Just read that, Harry,” said his sister, as she handed the landlord's letter to her brother. Harry read it through in silence, and then turned to his mother.

“I wonder if he is in earnest?”

“It looks so to me. Judging from the legal terms I should think that the paper had been written by his lawyer,” replied his mother.

“Mother, I’m going right over to see him. He has never been so anxious about his rent before, and there may be some mistake.”

There was certainly nothing better to be done under the circumstances, so Mrs. Ambler approved of her son’s suggestion, and he set out for the residence of the landlord.

The good woman soon recovered from the shock which she had felt when she first read the notice. She was by no means a nervous woman, but the distressing circumstances of her recent loss had of course had their effect upon her.

Nellie had not yet gained that composure which time and experience alone can give, and her indignation only increased as she thought over the hardship of their position and the seeming heartlessness of their landlord. When Harry had gone she gave expression to her feelings with the utmost freedom.

The two were left alone for nearly an hour to complete their household duties and await Harry’s return. At length Nellie broke out for perhaps the fiftieth time upon the same subject.

“Just to think, mother, a man as rich as he is.”

"Nellie," interposed her mother, at length, "please don't talk any more about the matter. It does no kind of good, and just keeps us excited when we need to be most cool. Harry will be back very soon and then we will know more about it."

"There he comes now, just getting over the fence into the meadow. He must be in a hurry or he would have come by the lane."

"Oh, he often cuts across the field," replied Mrs. Ambler, desirous of avoiding all unnecessary excitement.

In a very few minutes Harry entered the room hot, breathless, and angry. He tossed his cap on the table and dropped into the nearest chair.

"Well, my boy, what does it all mean?"

"He's worse than a hog," replied the boy, still too much out of breath to waste much of it in words.

"Surely, Harry, he don't insist upon our raising such a sum of money between now and Friday, knowing, as he does, all about our trouble?"

The boy drew several long breaths, as if to catch up with his usual rate of breathing, and then undertook to describe his visit to Mr. Tull.

“Why, mother, you never in all your life saw anybody’s manner change as Mr. Tull’s has towards us. He was always a rough man, of course, but while father was alive he treated us as well as he treated any one. But to-day he talked and acted as if we were a set of tramps who had taken possession of his house.”

“My dear boy,” said Mrs. Ambler, with a dubious shake of the head, “I fear that you have forgotten yourself and said or done something that has set Mr. Tull against us. We have all been so much disturbed of late that I can’t wonder at it,” she added, by way of apology.

“But I didn’t, mother—at least not until I had to. I knocked at the door as usual, and said ‘good morning’ to Ned when he opened it. He gave a grunt, as much as to say that he had rather expected to see me before long.

“When I asked if his father was at home, he said something which I understood to mean that he was. He then closed the door in my face and went upstairs. As I heard him calling to his father, I waited at the door for Mr. Tull’s appearance.

“Somehow, Ned Tull has always hated me

and I never knew exactly why, unless it is because I am younger than he is, and yet keep ahead of him at school. It would take a smarter boy than I am to even pretend to be as stupid as Ned is at his lessons."

This speech sounded a little boastful, but Harry soon recovered himself, and went on with his narrative.

"Well, Mr. Tull came down after awhile and opened the door. Instead of asking me in, he deliberately seated himself just inside the door, and let me stand outside the whole time."

"That was polite, I must say," remarked Nellie.

"Oh, I soon saw that it was all done to show me that things were very different now from what they were during father's life, and to keep me from asking any favors upon the strength of old acquaintance. When I told him that we could neither raise the money, nor move, upon such short notice, he expressed great surprise, and asked if we hadn't known when the rent would fall due."

"The old hypocrite," indignantly broke in Nellie again. "He knows why we haven't the money just as well as we do ourselves."

"Of course he does. Then he made some remarks about people who live beyond their means, and expect others to take care of them when they get into trouble, and about boys who go to school to show off their book-learning when they ought to be at work.

"Now, I didn't mind any of that very much, because it might be his honest opinion, but he couldn't stop at that. When he saw that I was not hurt at what he had already said, he became more severe. Ned took part in the conversation, too, and they became very insulting.

"Once, when I said that if you and Nellie had to leave here on Friday, I didn't know where you would find shelter, Ned laughed and remarked that the residence in their lower pasture was not occupied at present—which meant their old cow-shed. The old man seemed to consider the joke a very good one, indeed.

"Of course, mother, since we have had so much worriment, I am not able to control myself as well as I was before, although I had made up my mind before I went to the house not to lose my temper. When at last Mr. Tull straightened himself back in his chair and re-

marked very deliberately that for his part he never could understand how it was that paupers always spread themselves so when it came to funerals, I couldn't stand it any longer."

"Paupers! Did he use that word, Harry?"

"Yes, mother, and as soon as he saw that it hurt me, he used it over and over again. Then I talked very plainly for awhile, and I don't know exactly what I did say. He became very angry, or pretended to, and said that I had insulted him, and I expect he was right. As to the notice, he said that it meant just exactly what it said—the money or the house by Friday noon. That's the whole of it."

Without spending much time in useless indignation, Mrs. Ambler set to work to devise some way to meet the sudden trouble that was upon them. Several plans were suggested but they hardly seemed to answer the needs of the occasion.

"Mamma, I wonder if Mr. Conner wouldn't help us? He and father were always good friends," asked Nellie, at length.

"That's it, mother," said Harry; "let me go and see Mr. Conner. Why didn't we think of that before?"

"Very well, Harry; I am perfectly willing to have you try. I doubt whether Mr. Conner has such a sum of money to spare, but both he and Mrs. Conner will sympathize with us and help us if they can."

"Then I'm off. It's a good deal easier to be running around than to sit still and think about old Tull," and the boy seized his cap from the table and started upon his visit to the "Falls Mill," which was a full mile and a half from the Ambler farm. His mother stood at the window and watched him until he was well on his way.

"I'm sure Harry won't have to stand outside of the door to tell our troubles to Mr. and Mrs. Conner," she said, in a tone which showed how deeply she felt the treatment that her son had received.

Nellie bit her lip and remained silent, but her flashing eyes made it plain that her comments would not have been so mild.

There certainly was something about the boy, as he walked briskly up the road, that justified the pride of his mother and sister. Every motion denoted promptness and determination, yet without the least suggestion of the swaggerer. He was erect without being

at all pompous or stiff, and the freedom of his motions showed that he had never been compelled to perform tasks beyond his strength. His limbs had retained their suppleness at the same time that they had acquired muscle. The careful observer would have suspected that the boy was something of an athlete for one of his age. His step was light and regular, his skin clear, and his eye steady.

In conversation he looked the other person full in the face, and spoke without hesitation. Neither in thought, speech nor action did he show any of those faults that come from timidity or cowardice, although his manner was so quiet that it was sometimes mistaken for fear by those who judge too hastily from first appearances. He was gentle and respectful to his mother and sister, and welcomed their assistance and advice. They in their turn were very proud of him and were daily learning to rely more and more upon his judgment and protection. He must now supply the place of the one so recently called away.

While he had the faults common to boyhood, he certainly deserved the homely compliment bestowed upon him by Mrs. Conner.

The worthy woman saw him trudging up the hill at the end of the journey upon which we have just seen him enter. Turning to her husband, Mrs. Conner remarked:

“Gregory, there’s a man inside o’ that boy, sure.”

CHAPTER II

TWO VISITS

GREGORY CONNER was a Scotchman who had come to America in his early manhood, and for many years had been the owner of what was known as the "Falls Mill." His judgment was sometimes warped by what may be called a little over-caution, mixed with a touch of obstinacy, but his good qualities entirely outweighed these trifling blemishes. His wife was not Scottish by birth, although she frequently dropped into the manners and forms of speech which were still quite noticeable with her husband.

They were both of kindly dispositions, industrious, and honest, and were generally liked by the farmers of the neighborhood. Mr. Ambler and the miller had become well acquainted, and had had many occasions for the interchange of favors. Harry, who had always been a welcome visitor at the mill, now rapped at the door. It was at once opened

to him, and he was warmly greeted by the worthy couple.

"We be always glad to see you, lad," said Mr. Conner, as he placed a chair for their guest, "and how be the mother and sister?"

"We're all very well in health, Mr. Conner, but we are having a good deal of worriment just now," replied Harry, naturally anxious to make the purpose of his visit known as soon as possible.

"Of course, of course," said the other, "Parker Ambler will be missed for mony a long day to come."

He supposed, very reasonably, that Harry referred to the recent death of his father.

"Yes, Mr. Conner, it all comes from father's death to be sure, but just now we have another trouble. Mr. Tull has served a rent notice on us."

"Served a rent notice on you?" spoke up Mrs. Conner. "This be surely an odd time to get stiff about the rent."

"Well, he sent Ned over this morning with this notice. You see it is for Friday at the latest, and I believe the lease gives him the right to turn us out," and Harry handed the paper to Mr. Conner, who read it to his wife.

Then followed a number of questions and explanations which gave a full understanding of the whole matter. At length the miller seemed to have reached a conclusion, as he laid the notice upon the table before him.

"He don't mean it, lad—not what he says in here. What he really wants, no doubt, is that you shall give up a bit of the wood lot, or a piece of the meadow, or possibly that you shall give security for the coming rent, now that the father's gone. He'll na turn you out of the house."

Mrs. Conner, however, shook her head doubtfully as she re-read the positive language of the notice.

"I'm no so sure o' that, Gregory, when I remember how he treated the Crandalls. Jerry Tull be full mean enough to do it."

"I mind all o' that, Margie, I mind all that, but he aint mean enough to drive the widow and bairns off the place while the wheat the father bought and sowed is still in the ground. He'll na take the place against the coming harvest. Tell the mother she can rest on that."

"But, Mr. Conner," persisted Harry, "I had a long talk with Mr. Tull this morning,

and he seemed to me to be very much in earnest. He insisted upon the house or the rent by Friday."

"I don't doubt his words were sure enough, but you'll find I'm right in the end, and it's somewhat else he's after. Why, lad, he knows that all the money was lost with the father, and dollars don't grow on the bushes hereabouts."

"I told him all about the way we're fixed over and over again, but it seemed to make no difference. He always came back to the money or the house. Once he said something about her leaving the Crossing and going to Massachusetts, and that he might make it easier for us if we did, but I was not able to understand how we were to be benefited. I'm very sure he's in earnest."

At last the boy's decided opinion and Mrs. Conner's support, so far convinced the miller that he promised to call on Tull the next morning and persuade him to be more lenient than his notice seemed to indicate.

"It's just as like," he added, finally, "that the man will put it full as strong to me, but he won't mean it if he does."

Harry thanked his friends, and set out on

his return to the cottage. While he took with him no promise of money, yet the cordial sympathy of Mr. and Mrs. Conner seemed like substantial assistance to the anxious mother and sister who were awaiting his arrival. They talked it all over again, more hopefully than before, and decided to take no further action until they should learn the result of Mr. Conner's intervention on the morrow.

Bright and early on the following morning the miller set about the task he had undertaken, and was soon on his way to the residence of the landlord. Mr. Tull was a widower, and his family consisted of himself, his son Ned, a somewhat savage dog "Brock," and the household servants. The dog was the first to greet the new arrival, and his growling attracted his master's attention. Tull called off the dog, and himself walked down to the gate to meet the miller. As he was never given to any very great exhibition of courtesy, Conner felt that Tull must have some special reason for going out of his way upon this occasion.

They seated themselves upon the porch and no time was wasted in general conversation.

Mr. Conner went right to the point. It struck him that his host was not entirely surprised at the nature of his errand.

The landlord listened with great apparent respect to the miller's explanations and suggestions, but was unmoved by their force. At first he made show of answering his arguments, but when the miller became more persistent, Mr. Tull dropped back into his usual tone when dealing with those who opposed him.

The woman knew that the rent would fall due at this time and she should have been ready to meet it. He was not going to give up his rights on account of a little sniveling.

When his visitor spoke of the very recent and sudden death of Mr. Ambler, he replied that he didn't kill Mr. Ambler, and must not be expected to lose by his death. As to the loss of the money which Ambler had with him at the time of his death, Mr. Tull again replied that he had nothing to do with it. Mr. Ambler should have been more careful of both his life and his money.

The Scotchman soon saw that there was but slight hope of success to his mission, but he was very sure from the other's efforts at

self-control that he was holding back some offer or suggestion which he would bring forward in due time. Curious to learn what it might be, our friend gave up his own efforts and prepared to depart. He had actually started towards the gate when Tull recalled him.

“Conner, this here thing is kind o’ awkward all ’round an’ I aint dead sure that I’m right, but I want to be, I guess you know that. Now, you’ve took sich a interest in that ’ere family that I kind o’ feel ’zif I was bound to help you ef it could be anyhow managed. I think it like as not you’re doing all this without making a cent?”

The miller replied that of course he was not to be paid for an act of neighborly kindness.

“That’s jest what I said to myself while you was a-talking awhile ago, an’ I respect you fer yer kindness to them that needs it. If I kin see how it kin be done I’ll help yo’ in it, too, blamed ef I don’t.”

Mr. Tull’s altered manner so misled the miller that he was about to renew his own proposition. The other saw this and prevented it by advancing his own plan.

“It aint no how possible, Conner, fer the

widow to stay on the old place, but while we was talking it occurred to me that it was jest possible that some arrangement might be made that would help her an' be a sort of public benefit at the same time. It's jes' possible.

"It's clear enough to me that the widow aint going to get along around this part o' the country. She'll either be in the poor-house, or you an' me will be takin' care o' the family out o' our own pockets in less than six months. Now, all I want is to take things in time.

"I happen to know fer a fac' that the widow's got relations back in Massachusetts that's tolerable well fixed, an' if she could be quietly got back there, she'd be all right. Now, how on arth can it be done?"

Tull paused long enough to give his visitor time to fully grasp the facts that he had presented, but not long enough to enable him to make any new suggestions.

"There's jes' two things in the way o' placin' the widow where she'd be among her own kin. One is the money, and the other is the woman herself. It would cost considerable, and then jes' as like as not Mrs. Ambler wouldn't see the need o' goin'. It's not quite

easy to explain to a woman that's al'ays lived comfortable, that she's likely to be a pauper in a few weeks. You kin see that easy enough yourself.

"Now, that's the situation, Conner, an' this is jes' exactly what I'll do to help. If Mrs. Ambler will take your advice fer her own good, and go back where she belongs, I'll give her a clear receipt for the quarter's rent, and I'll give her ten days' rent free to pack up her things."

"I'm afraid," suggested the miller, "that even if she is willing, Mrs. Ambler has not the means necessary to take such a journey."

This probability seemed to bring Tull to a standstill for some minutes, but at length a look of sudden resolution came into his face.

"See here, Conner, I aint the man to stop short in a thing o' this sort when I've got started. I'll buy the widow's crop o' wheat—that I aint bound to pay a cent for if I don't want to—an' I'll pay her enough to take 'em all back to Massachusetts in good shape. I reckon she'll see that's kind o' handsome under all the circumstances."

Mr. Conner did not at once respond, and it occurred to the landlord that perhaps he had

not yet shown sufficient reasons for such generous conduct. To avoid the suspicion of some selfish motive, that might arise from an act of unjustifiable charity upon his part, he hastened to explain.

"Of course, Conner, I aint pretending to you that I haint got no special interest in the thing outside o' 'comodating the widow. Fer I have. If I go ahead an' put her out o' the house by law, why o' course there'll be a lot o' cacklin' and howlin' about it, an' it'll keep up fer a year. Now, I've got my feelin's jes' like the rest, and I don't like to be misunderstood by my neighbors. I'm willing to spend my own money to help them out peaceful an' quiet-like, rather than make any sich trouble."

Having now supplied two motives for his offer, he felt that they ought to satisfy the miller without setting him to looking for anything deeper.

Mr. Conner, seeing that there was nothing more to be done, promised to explain the offer to Mrs. Ambler, and if it was accepted, to inform Mr. Tull at once. He then took his leave and, according to promise, was soon at the cottage.

He presented the occurrences just as they

have been laid before the reader. The matter was considered, and all of its results taken into account. None of the family felt like accepting the terms that were laid down by the landlord, so it was decided to inform him that they preferred to remain at the Crossing for the present.

Naturally they were all very curious as to the motives which had operated upon Mr. Tull to cause his wish to send them away in such haste. As he had already referred to them as paupers, Mrs. Ambler was inclined to believe that he actually feared that they would be unable to support themselves and become a charge upon the neighborhood.

Singularly enough, Mr. Conner still stuck to his belief that Tull would not go so far as to turn the family out upon the short notice already given. Whether or not he could have given any reasonable ground for this opinion, or merely held on to it because of the difficulty to one of his nationality in letting go of an opinion, we cannot say.

When he was going home, Harry followed him to the gate.

"Now, Harry, don't let the mother and sister fret o'er much about the matter. I make

no doubt there'll be a deal o' blustering on Friday, but he'll na move you out."

"I can't feel so sure of that, Mr. Conner, but we'll keep up our spirits as well as we can, and I have no doubt but it will all come out right at last. I'd like mighty well to know what makes him want to drive us away from the Crossing."

"I can na answer that, lad, and it's like enough that Tull himself doesn't know," and cracking his whip, the miller was off to the Falls.

In the course of a life which had now reached its sixtieth year, Mr. Conner had never made a worse guess than this last one. Jeremiah Tull did know just exactly why he wanted to drive the little family away as far as possible from their present home, and his motive was neither charity, nor fear of public opinion, nor the desire to recover his rent.

That the reader may understand this motive which was so far beyond the grasp of Harry Ambler and his honest friend, it now becomes necessary to turn to certain events which had occurred before the opening of our narrative.

CHAPTER III

DISAPPOINTED HOPES

PARKER AMBLER was a middle-aged New England man who had, about eight years before the opening of our narrative, removed from the stony little homestead in Massachusetts to the more fertile and promising lands among the eastern foot-hills of the Allegheny mountains in Pennsylvania. Here he had rented a farm from one of the larger land-owners and set to work to build up a home for himself and family.

Like most New England people, the Amblers had a strong desire for independence and wanted to own their own home. With this purpose in view they had worked industriously and economized closely for eight years, until at last it had seemed as if their hopes were about to be realized. Then without a moment's warning their cheerful prospect had been swept from sight in the twinkling of an eye.

A single catastrophe had taken from them the husband and father, and at the same time robbed them of his and their earnings, and left the mother and two children penniless. As the circumstances surrounding Mr. Ambler's death are intimately related to the incidents of our narrative, we will now briefly refer to them.

During their residence at "Tull's Crossing," as the settlement was called, Mr. Ambler had been able to lay aside nearly three hundred dollars a year, which he had sent to Philadelphia for deposit in a savings bank. When this with its interest had grown to nearly twenty-six hundred dollars it was determined to set about the purchase of the home.

Jeremiah Tull was probably never more astonished in his life than on that fine morning when his tenant called on him with the request that he should fix a price upon the farm. The landlord would have very much preferred the previous arrangement. He had always received a good rent and had it on the day that it was due. Moreover, it was the opinion of Mr. Tull and others whose judgment was valuable, that the price of land in the locality would increase within the next

few years, and it would have gone hard with him to see some one else reap the profit.

On the other hand, he could not forget that the increase in value was only a matter of guess-work, and that Mr. Ambler was evidently ready to pay cash. If Mr. Tull would not sell, some one else in the neighborhood would be glad to, and he would lose his tenant in either event. Upon the whole he concluded to sell and "even up on Ambler some other way." The reader need not be told that Mr. Tull was not likely to be particular as to the exact method by which he should make up his imaginary loss.

It was finally arranged that the two men should meet at the town of Mountville upon a day named and complete the sale of the farm. Mountville was not the county-seat, but it was the nearest place at which the deed could be drawn and executed. It was situated on the line of the railroad and had an express office, so that Mr. Ambler was able to have his money sent directly to him there and thus avoid the risk of keeping so large a sum about a farm-house.

There was no regular lawyer at Mountville, but there was a notary by the name of Joshua

Bates, who did a good deal of business of this character. His standing was not very good, but he was the only one who could be conveniently had, so Mr. Ambler assented to Mr. Tull's suggestion to employ him. He had been Mr. Tull's adviser for a number of years, and that gentleman considered him entirely satisfactory. So it happened that the two men found themselves in Mountville at the time fixed, notwithstanding a severe rain-storm that had set in the night before.

Mr. Ambler drew his money and, with an elastic step, proceeded to the office of the notary. True, the purchase would take all of his earnings, but then he would be forever secure in a home for himself and family.

He found Mr. Tull and Bates awaiting his arrival, and the three men spent nearly an hour together in the notary's office. At the end of that time Mr. Ambler came out and at once started for home. The distance did not exceed four miles, and, under ordinary circumstances, the walk would have been a mere trifle. Now, however, although the storm had lulled, its results were just being shown in the swollen streams. What had been but quiet brooks before, had now for the time being become dangerous torrents.

Exactly what occurred will never be known, but Mr. Ambler must have somehow lost his footing in attempting to cross one of these streams, and been carried away.

His family never saw him again alive.

The storm soon disappeared, leaving the atmosphere clearer and the sky more peaceful for its coming. The next morning, Mr. Tull, who had remained in town over night, ordered his horse and set out for the "Crossing." His mood was not of the brightness of the sky. The price which he had fixed for the farm would have seemed large enough to most people, but he could not help thinking of the possibility of having held it for awhile longer and obtained three times the amount.

Just as he reached Rab's Run—a considerable stream which crossed the road at the distance of about two miles from Mountville—he was startled by an apparition in black. A small negro boy came dashing along the bank of the stream in manifest excitement.

"What in blazes do you mean blowing over into the road in front o' a man's horse in that 'ere style?" demanded Tull, as he regained control of his frightened steed.

"Dar's a man right down dar, sah, on de bank ob de Run, an' I's goin' ter town ter tell de justice, right orf," and the boy started towards Mountville.

"Wall, what's the man doing? He aint fishing, I reckon, in such a lookin' stream as that."

"Fishin'? No sah, de man am drowned."

"Hold on here, Snowdrop," said Tull, as he wheeled his horse across the boy's path, "tell us all about it. What kind o' clothes has he got on? 'Taint a kind o' brown suit is it, with a black necktie?"

"It am berry much like dat, sah, berry much, indeed."

"How far is it from here?"

"Jes' 'bout half a mile, right on dis hyar side of the stream, sah."

"Wall, now, Johnny, you needn't give yourself any more trouble about it. I'll jes' tend to the matter o' telling the justice," and, turning his horse, Tull was soon out of sight, on his way back to town.

The boy was very strongly impressed with the belief that he had been deprived of some of those "civil rights" of which he had heard so much. He had contemplated the appear-

ance of his name in large letters at the head of the county newspaper in its account of the accident. As he saw his news being carried off by the object of his own unsuspecting confidence, he was tempted to try a cross-cut to town on foot. A glance at the white horse, however, as he vanished in the distance, convinced him that the odds were too much against him. He returned to the place of his discovery.

Not finding the situation especially attractive, the boy soon wandered further down the stream. Climbing to the top of a mound of rock somewhat more elevated than the rest, the boy found a very comfortable location. The elements had formed a considerable hollow upon the top of the mound, with the apparent purpose of making a very snug resting-place for one small colored boy. The walls were high enough to keep off the wind, while the spring sunshine fell without obstruction upon the occupant of the rocky nest. It fitted Jock to perfection, and, curling up like a cat, he was soon lost to the pleasures and troubles of this world.

In the meantime others were not sleeping. Tull was not long in reaching Mountville,

and in a few moments more would have performed his errand with the justice. As he approached the office, however, he began to slacken his horse's pace, as if he was not quite sure of his own purpose, and then, suddenly turning about, he galloped in the opposite direction to the office of Bates, the notary. The interview was brief between the two. Mr. Tull soon emerged, and again mounting his steed, set out for home. There was now no uncertainty in his motions. In a few minutes he had galloped back to the point where the colored boy had startled his horse on the former trip.

Some little time after Mr. Tull had departed, the notary hurried to the justice's office and gave notice of the accident. A party was sent out as soon as possible to secure the remains and gather any information as to the circumstances of the death.

Jock was suddenly awakened from his sleep by the snapping of dried twigs, and, raising himself upon his knees, he cautiously peeped over the wall of his little watch-tower. His surprise was great when he beheld the very man whom he had so recently left on the Mountville road. His surprise was still

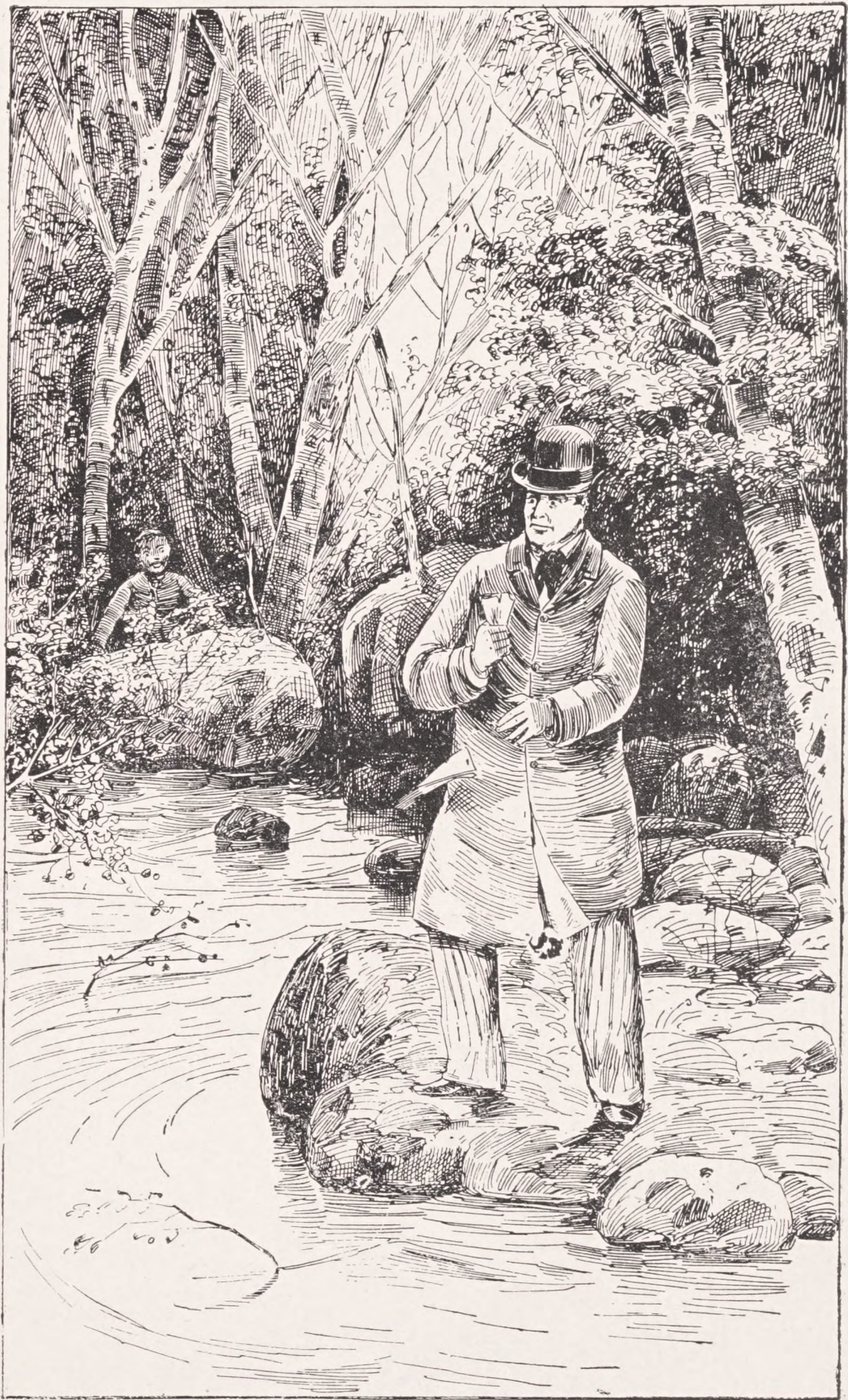
greater when he observed the man's actions. He was standing near the body of the drowned man and was holding in his hand a large brown envelope. This article was evidently giving him some anxiety.

He first tried to put it into his coat pocket, but it was so large that the idea was soon abandoned. He next opened the envelope and took out its contents—a large document of some kind. Stooping down so that he was partially concealed from view, he endeavored to burn the paper, as Jock could make out from the small wreaths of smoke that circled about the spot. It must have been too damp for burning, for the man arose after awhile with a gesture of impatience. The paper was somewhat blackened by the smoke, but no part of it was destroyed.

The man's impatience now seemed to increase, and he drew out his watch as if time was a matter of importance to him. Suddenly, in the midst of his uncertainty, his attention seemed to become riveted upon the stream that was dashing and boiling past him, almost at his very feet. Advancing hastily to the water's edge, he grasped the mysterious envelope and tore it in two. The next moment he

flung the fragments into the thickest of the boiling current. For a few seconds he stood and watched them. Disappearing at first, they came to the surface once or twice, and then seeming to yield to the inevitable, they vanished from his sight. Their destruction seemed as certain as was that of the little clusters of bubbles that formed for an instant about them, and then burst into nothingness beneath his gaze. A look of satisfaction settled on his face. His purpose was apparently accomplished. Mounting his horse, he hastened up the creek to the crossing of the Mountville road.

The black curly head arose higher above the wall. The white teeth shone in the sunlight, as the lips parted, and from somewhere in the boy's throat came the indefinable but emphatic word, "golly."



HE FLUNG THE FRAGMENTS INTO THE THICKEST OF THE
BOILING CURRENT

CHAPTER IV

JOCK'S LUCK

THE contented horseman had hardly gotten under way when Jock dropped from his perch to the ground, very much as a frightened bull-frog might respond to the arguments of a boy with a sling. His eyes had been fixed upon the fugitive papers as they came down the stream.

Sometimes they would be churned up and down in some rocky caldron until it would seem that the words written upon their surface must be shaken back into a senseless chaos of letters. Now the current would carry them to one bank, and now to the other. Then they would separate and follow both banks at once. This latter movement was exceedingly embarrassing to Jock, who had the misfortune, under the circumstances, of being straight of vision.

He raced along the bank, however, ready to take advantage of any lucky accident

which might enable him to rescue from the current the mysterious paper that had seemed so troublesome to its last possessor. Every once in awhile he would make a dash to the water's edge as one or other of the fragments swept towards him, but by the time he had gained a favorable position, the object of his pursuit would have returned to the swifter water and be off down the stream. At length the boy had the good fortune to secure a pole that lay along his path. Then one of the pieces of paper floated into an eddy and, for the present at least, withdrew from the race.

Jock saw that his fortune was improving, and he renewed his efforts.

"Dat's right. You jes' stick to de flyin' hosses fer awhile an' I'll come back an' took'd yer off," he called to the paper that was circling in the eddy as he shot off after its more fortunate companion.

Just ahead of them was a point at which the banks of the stream came so close together that Jock's pole would certainly reach the desired object. Increasing his speed, he had his pole in position to be of most use by the time it was needed. At the proper moment a twist and a jerk landed his singular

game safely on the bank. Its companion was an easy prey, and Jock soon had both pieces spread out upon the surface of a flat rock for examination.

Fortunately the paper was thick and strong and was consequently more injured in appearance than in substance. Jock set about investigating his prize. He easily succeeded in fitting the two parts together, but at this early point his efforts as a translator came to a sudden termination.

He examined with interest the various forms of written and printed letters which appeared upon the paper. They were all equally beyond his grasp. He carefully turned the paper upside down and then went around to the other side of the stone. It looked much the same as before. Then, giving up for the present, he folded the paper for convenience in carrying, and proceeded up the stream towards the starting point of the race.

"I'll jes' han' you fellers ober to Marm. She'll fin' you out. Anyway, I guess yo' wasn't 'tended to be drowneded, no more than burned."

With this highly creditable line of reasoning Jock returned towards his first point of

discovery. As he approached he heard the sound of voices and saw that a party of men, having with them a horse and wagon, had taken possession of the remains.

"Wonder ef dem gent'mens hab got any mo' prope'ty to frow away. Guess I'll jes' keep close an' see 'bout dat 'are."

He accordingly hid himself among the rocks and bushes near enough for profitable observation. Some of the party had crossed the run in search of anything which might shed light on the circumstances of the accident. The two parties continued to talk back and forth across the creek, and as Jock was nearer to each party than they were to each other, he fairly considered himself included in the conversation. He was, however, content to remain a modest listener.

"Say, Jim," called out one of the party, "oughtn't we to catch the fellow who first found the body, and take him in to the lock-up? You know Bates says that the man had over two thousand dollars on him when he left Mountville, and whoever found him will have to account for that money or go to jail until he can show that he didn't get it."

"That's so; but I don't remember who

Bates said brought in the news, and anyway, I reckon we can get him if he's wanted."

As he heard these sinister suggestions Jock dropped flat on the ground and didn't move a kink or a toe until the sound of departing wheels assured him that the coast was clear.

"Golly me, but dis chil' hab good luck. Lock Jock up 'til he 'count fer two thousan' dollars? Reck'n ef he'd gone to town wid de news dis hyar chil' been in jail fer life dis berry minit."

We may here add that Jock was not at the inquest on the following day.

On that occasion there was of course no direct information as to the circumstances of Mr. Ambler's death, but from all the facts there was no room for doubt that it was a case of accidental drowning. The evidence of Mr. Tull and the notary did, however, shed some new light upon the transaction which had taken Mr. Ambler to town.

They both explained that when, in drawing the deed, Mr. Bates reached the place for mentioning the number of acres that was to be transferred for the price agreed upon, a difference of opinion arose. Mr. Tull said that it was one hundred and three acres, while Mr. Ambler

thought he was to receive ten acres more. After discussing the matter for some time they were unable to agree, and Mr. Ambler left the office, and started for home. While they did not see Mr. Ambler's money, they knew that he had drawn it from the express office and had it with him at the office of the notary.

Mr. Tull explained that he had received his first news, as to the death, from a colored boy who had found the body. He did not know the boy's name, but had seen him before, and believed that he would recognize him if he met him again.

Of course the death created a sensation in the neighborhood, as Mr. Ambler was becoming well and favorably known in his new home. As to the loss of the money there were two theories. One was that it had been swept away by the swift current of Rab's Run, and the other that it had been stolen by the unknown colored boy who first found the body. Unfortunately the last of these theories was the one which prevailed with the *Union Bugle*, in its account of the inquest the next day.

Now, the reader has already learned that Jock

was not much of a scholar himself, though he had unlimited confidence in "Marm"—as he called the old colored woman who had, up to this time, conducted his youthful steps towards greatness. So it happened that the boy made it his business on the day following the inquest to get a copy of the *Bugle* and leave it in Marm's way. He then awaited results. He had not yet told her of his part in the discovery, and thought it wise to first learn the ideas of the *Bugle* upon the subject. The torn paper, which he had rescued from the creek, lay carefully concealed under his mattress in the attic.

Now, we are sorry to be obliged to admit that Jock's estimate of Marm's literary ability was considerably too high. About the best that could be truthfully said of the old lady was that on a clear day and at close range she could attack the average circus poster with a very fair chance of success. It must be further said to her credit that she was always ready to undertake any "bit o' reading wo'k" that came in her way.

The great head-lines soon attracted her attention, and she seated herself on the back step with the paper spread across her knees.

Jock was busy scouring knives by the simple method of repeatedly plunging them into the soft earth just by the door.

After a few moments of silent perusal of the paper, Marm broke out:

"Look a hyar, picanniny. What you s'pose is gon' an' happened right down in de Run?"

"Reck'n de water oberflowed the banks. It war 'mighty high sinc' de rain," replied Jock, with as much unconcern as he could muster.

"No, sah. Yu' s'pose dey put all dem big letters at de top jes' fer de high water in de crick? Da's been a man drowned, an' his money was all tuck away, too. Dat am the Bible truf."

Jock left the knife he was cleaning sticking in the ground, and coming up to Marm, tried to make something out of the great black letters.

"Why, chil', jes' you lis'n to dis hyar."

" 'The unfortunate man robbed of over two thousand dollars.' 'The evidence points to the Negro boy who discovered the body as the thief.' 'He is not yet in custody but will be apprehended within a day or two.' " Marm read these headlines very slowly, sometimes stopping to spell the longer words.

"Da, Jock; I jes' bet dat's some ob dem Bramble Town darkies what's gone an' done dat."

"What's 'apperhended' mean, Marm?" asked the boy without seeming to notice the reflection on their Bramble Town neighbors.

"Apperhended? Why apperhended means tuck up by the sheriff and put in jail, an' sometimes hungd, ef it's fer som'thin' pretty bad."

The woman gave her answer in entire unconsciousness of the real terror which her words were bringing to the little black form by her side.

When Jock had finished his task he stole away to the woods to puzzle his frightened little brain over the trouble that he saw ahead of him. It must be remembered that his life and experience had not been such as to give him that confidence in the final victory of the right which is sometimes but not always, found among the more enlightened. He felt the full force of the circumstances which pointed to him—a friendless little waif—as the thief, but he saw no hopeful way to meet them.

He wandered around until nearly noon, when he returned once more towards the

cabin. Before leaving the woods he cautiously took a survey of the situation, and his caution was fully justified by the facts. At the cabin there were no less than three horsemen, and Jock could tell from Marm's manner that their errand was of an exciting character. The leader of the party, who seemed to be threatening somebody or something very violently, was the same man whom the boy had encountered on the road and who had afterwards torn up the mysterious paper at the creek.

Jock had been born a slave, although Lincoln's pen had shattered his chains before he had fairly felt their weight. Marm, the slave companion of his dead mother, had brought the baby north to freedom. She had been a most faithful guardian, but she could teach him nothing of the equality of human rights beyond the results of her own experience.

It is not then to be wondered at that Jock trembled with fear as he beheld the mounted party at the cabin. He knew that their errand must be his arrest, and his own terror and Marm's words had so magnified the possibilities of the penalty that he saw his only hope in immediate flight.

Turning his back on the only home he had ever known, he fled as fast and as far as he could. That night he found refuge in a deserted barn, miles away from the little cabin, and on the morrow, driven onward by the same terror, he trudged forward towards the rising sun and an unknown future.

Jock is not the hero of our story, and we shall not follow his uncertain footsteps to the great city into whose tide of humanity he plunged at last. We must remember, however, that he has become entangled in the events of our narrative through no fault of his own. Let us, therefore, wish for him a safe deliverance from the dangers of ignorance, poverty, and crime which must of necessity surround his future pathway. May he at last find light.

CHAPTER V

SECRETS

JEREMIAH TULL and Joshua Bates were in some respects very different men, and yet they had for years been on terms of the closest intimacy. Tull had been a remarkably successful man in the accumulation of property, while Bates would have been hard pushed to raise a hundred dollars of his own.

Tull's wealth, it is true, had seemed to come from accidental causes. Years ago he had purchased, at trifling cost, a large tract of land, which had since then increased in value on his hands. The development of the farming and lumber industries had caused a settlement to spring up on his land, and finally the government had established a post-office at "Tull's Crossing."

It is needless to add that these combined causes had made Mr. Tull a man of prominence in the neighborhood. He had already held the various petty offices of the township,

and at the opening of our narrative he was looking upward. As he expressed it, he "was bein' spoke of fer Harrisburg," which meant that he was doing his level best to be elected to the legislature.

Now, Mr. Tull was unusually wise in one respect. He was aware that as a cold matter of fact he didn't know very much, or, to quote his own words once more, he "never could see a idee mor'n a mile ahead."

Joshua Bates, on the other hand, was a man of quick thought, and could reach the probable result of a line of events while Tull was getting ready to think about them.

So it happened that Tull was Bates's most valuable client. It had been years since he had taken any important step in business without the notary's advice. If Bates pointed out a scheme by which Tull could reap a profit, the latter would adopt it with confidence and follow it boldly. Neither of these men was troubled with a conscience. If it is imaginable that Tull should under any circumstances decline to follow any profitable line of action upon merely moral grounds, we can only say that up to the opening of our story no such awkward situation had arisen.

When satisfied that a particular course would result to his profit, Jeremiah Tull became active, persistent, and unscrupulous, although under ordinary circumstances he was inclined to be rather sluggish in action as well as thought.

Now, when Tull met the negro boy, Jock, on the road, and learned of Mr. Ambler's death, his first thought was as to the possibility of the catastrophe being turned to his own advantage. The question had occupied his mind all the way back to Mountville, but he had failed to work out any satisfactory answer. Just before he reached the justice's office he had, as the reader will remember, concluded to consult Bates.

As soon, however, as Tull had imparted his startling information to the notary, the latter began to see very definitely how the situation might be made profitable to both his client and himself.

Partly from the peculiar character of their transactions, and partly from the fact that Tull seemed to take ideas more easily when put at him in that way, these two men had formed the habit of discussing their affairs very indirectly. As somebody had once said,

if Bates desired to remark to Tull that it was a "fine day," he would probably say "that if to-morrow turns out like this it'll be mighty pleasant weather." They did not depart from their usual method upon this occasion.

"Well, Mr. Tull, if a professional man does his client a favor, even if it aint in the line o' business, and it happens to bring a good big piece of property to the client, how much do you think the attorney ought to be paid—just as a general question, now?"

"Wall," said the other, reflectively, but not at all surprised at the sudden turn that Bates had given to the conversation, "wall, I reckon, five per cent. of the vally o' the property 'd be about the thing. How's that strike you?"

"It ought to be ten per cent., Tull, on my word it ought. Not a cent less."

"Ef the p'int was a extra good one, Bates, p'raps it ought."

This was about the way they usually settled the question of fees.

"Why, that's awful sudden news about Ambler," remarked Bates, again giving the conversation a sudden turn.

"Well, well, if that aint about as singular a state of affairs as a man often sees," he re-

marked a moment later, as if a new idea had just struck him with considerable force.

"What's that, Josh?" queried Mr. Tull.

"Why, just you look at it yourself. What an awfully queer thing it would be if Ambler should happen not to have that deed about him when the body's brought in. It would be the most remarkable situation that I ever saw. You see the deed aint on record yet, and I was the only witness. Not another living soul except you and me knows for certain that it was made. Now if the deed itself got lost, why, as far as I can see, you'd still be the owner of the farm. Queer, aint it?"

"Why, y-e-s; I'm blamed ef it aint. But I say, Josh, what about that money? Of course they won't—that is, they may not find that money on him that he drewed from th' express office. How 'bout that?"

"Well, suppose they don't. The nigger must have taken it. Don't it seem that way to you? If anybody don't think that he took it, why then they'll know that the current was mighty swift in Rab's Run, and it washed the money clean away. *That* seems very likely to me."

Bates threw out these suggestions in an off-

hand manner that seemed to indicate that he had a dozen more which were just as good, but that he didn't consider it worth while to mention them unless they were called for.

"Besides which," he resumed, "we're not bound to account for the money. The fact is, as you know, the deal for the land fell through, and Ambler went away and took his money with him. We don't know where it is now."

He made this last assertion in such seeming good faith that it even deceived and alarmed Tull for a second. The latter clapped his hand on his coat pocket to assure himself that nothing was lost. The moment was slightly embarrassing, but Bates looked out of the window and Tull turned his action into a search for his handkerchief. There was not much time to be wasted in talk, and Tull was soon on the road again.

The reader already knows the practical result of this interview in the scene at Rab's Run.

After the inquest was over the two men had another meeting which had likewise an important bearing upon the events of our narrative. Bates was sitting with his chair tilted back and his feet lodged against the edge of

his desk. When Mr. Tull entered, the notary motioned him to close the door and be seated.

"Where is it?" asked Bates.

"All soaked to pieces in Rab's Run by this time. I tore it up and threw it in the creek."

"Tull, you don't mean to say that you actually threw that deed away after you once got hold of it?" asked the other, in evident irritation.

"Oh, now you needn't cackle about that," replied Tull, not at all relishing the attack. "What'd you want me to do with it—eat it? The blamed thing wouldn't go into my pocket, and I weren't quite green enough to carry it around in my hand. I tried to burn it, but it was no go. I jest tore it to pieces and throwed it into the b'ilin' stream. Why, I almost seen it go to pieces while I was standin' there."

As Tull recalled the appearance of the water as he had tossed the fragments of the deed to its tender mercies, he lost all patience with Bates's quibbling.

"This here's all woman nonsense, Josh. There aint enough o' that paper sticking together to make a spit-ball for a school-boy. Thare's somethin' else you was wantin' to talk about, wasn't there?"

"Yes, there is. I reckon on the whole that deed won't trouble us any more."

"Well, I should say not," again retorted Tull, by way of a final nail. "It aint no more chance than a mealy potato in a pot o' b'ilin' water."

"But," began Bates, in a more serious tone, "let's just suppose a case."

Mr. Tull was so accustomed to this kind of an introduction to business of real importance that his attention was fixed in a minute.

"Suppose you had wanted to buy a piece of ground for a good while and at last you'd got it, and paid for it, and had the deed in your pocket. Now if you were going home to tell your family about it, and were thinking about it every second of the time you were on the road, and should happen to meet somebody that you knew—perhaps only one man, or perhaps a dozen—what would you be likely to say?"

"I see what you're arter, without follerin' that up, Josh," responded Tull slowly, in a tone that showed that he realized the possible danger at which Bates had been hinting. "I reckon, Josh, I'd up and tell them all about the land I'd just bought—I've no doubt I would."

"And show them the new deed, wouldn't you?"

"Just as like as not, Josh. It'd seem very nat'ral."

"Well, now, to cut it short, Ambler is pretty sure to have acted just as you or any other man would have done under the same circumstances."

"Yes, ef he'd happened to meet anybody, but lucky enough—"

"*He did meet somebody!*" interrupted the notary.

Tull was paralyzed by this sudden turn of affairs, and sat for some time silently staring at Bates. Like most dangers which are not seen until we are close upon them, this one looked larger than life-size as it suddenly came in sight.

After the notary felt that his client was sufficiently frightened to undertake the line of action that he thought necessary, he resumed the conversation. The fact is that Bates was as much alarmed as Tull, only with him fear meant action instead of stupidity.

"Now look here, Jerry," said he, dropping his feet to the floor and drawing his chair up to the desk with an air of business, "you

understand as well as I do that we can't afford to sit still and let somebody find out what we've been at."

"Of course we can't."

"Then you must do something."

"Wall, what on arth kin I do?"

"Now I'll tell you, and if you go at it right and stick to it, as I know you can, the thing will be all straight. In the first place, I don't know who it was that met Ambler on the road, or whether or not he met more than one, and it won't do to ask any questions on the subject.

"The real danger is this. Whoever it was is likely any day to meet the widow or one of the children and tell them how he saw Ambler on the very day he was drowned, and how Ambler told about his new farm and showed the deed he'd just got. Then where'd we be?"

"It'd look mighty rough, there's no denyin' that."

"I should say it would. Now we can't drive off whoever it was that met Ambler, but you can drive off the widow and children so that there won't be any chance of their ever hearing anything about anybody having seen the deed. Now, to put it just the way it really

stands, Tull, your money and your reputation aint safe until that's been done. In fact, there's no telling how a criminal court and jury might look at the thing if you should ever happen to be arrested for taking the deed."

"It's no use talking about that, Bates; it aint coming to that. But how kin I drive off the Amblers? They've got a lease on the place."

"Easy enough if you know that it's got to be done, and go at it accordingly. I'll get you up a notice to serve on the widow, insisting on the rent on the quarter day, or the possession of the place. She can't pay, of course. Then you can take a charitable streak and let her off from the rent and help her to go back to her folks in Massachusetts besides. Pay them something if it comes to that.

"If that don't happen to work, why you can frighten them, or you can get up something on the boy that will break him all up. If he was caught stealing, for instance, I guess they'd all be glad to try some other locality. There's lots of ways of working the thing."

"That'll do, Josh. You jest draw up the notice and I'll put the thing through. It

won't do to hav' a risk like that a-hangin' over us fer all time. I'll take the bull by the horns," and Tull's manner showed more of quiet determination than at any other time during the conversation. Bates knew his man well, and he was satisfied that the war had begun in earnest.

"Now, Jerry, there's one thing more. We ought to make a fuss about that lost money. Suppose you and I, and one or two others, start out on horseback to catch that little nigger that everybody knows took the cash. It don't make much difference whether we find him or another one. You can threaten him all the same, and just as like as not he'll run away. If the little imp will do that the thing will be in fine shape."

"All right. I'm with you in anything that's needed, and I rather guess I can do the necessary threatenin' in pretty good style."

The scheme for hunting for Jock was promptly put into execution with most remarkable success. The boy's departure was accepted on all sides as a confession of guilt. Marm alone believed him innocent, and even she, was unable to account for his singular departure.

The more important undertaking of driving Mrs. Ambler and her two children away from the Crossing required time. The reader has already witnessed the first step. We need only add that Mr. Tull was not a man to easily abandon any scheme involving his own gain. When to this motive we add the fear of discovery in crime, it is evident that the future of the widow and children was not likely to be one of comfort.

The odds seemed to be all against them.

CHAPTER VI

TURNED OUT

THESE explanations of the secret causes, which were back of the landlord's sudden change of manner towards the Ambler family, will also make clear his future conduct.

Friday morning came soon enough to the little group, who were still uncertain where the setting sun would leave them. Mr. Conner, it is true, had continued his assurance that Tull would not carry his threat into execution—at least not without longer notice. Yet they dreaded the day.

The mother and daughter moved silently about their accustomed duties, carefully avoiding any reference to the fear which they both felt so keenly. Yet their very silence under the circumstances kept their minds more constantly on the subject.

That this was true, would have been easily proven to an observer by the repeated and anxious glances which each cast up the road

when the back of her companion chanced to be turned for a moment.

Perhaps the most painful feeling of all came to Nellie as she found herself setting the table for the noon meal, as she had done for years before. Like a dark cloud that suddenly sweeps over the face of the sun, came the thought that if Mr. Tull kept his threat they would have to undo even the present work of her hands, and go forth, she knew not whither, before their next meal was eaten. Harry was busy out-of-doors, and was not under quite such a strain, yet even he found himself suddenly wondering why he was cutting wood.

There was no such anxiety at the Tull residence. The old man had concluded not to accompany the constable, and had, therefore, delegated his authority to Ned, his son, to whom he was just giving some parting advice.

"Now, look here, Ned," he was saying, "when you first get there be pretty rough, as if you meant business and nothing else, you understand. Move out some o' the duds without stoppin' to jaw with the ol' woman. By the time you've made a trip or so, I reckon, she'll have some favors to ask, and then you'll have a chance to dicker. Don't be too anxious

about it. After awhile, though, when you get a good chance you can make a sort o' offer to let them have ten days' rent free, pervided they're all to go back to Massachusetts, or to some other place out of Pennsylvania."

"S'pose they aint got no money to go with?" queried Ned.

"Wall, I'll give 'em enough fer their crop to take 'em off; but go mighty slow about promisin' money. You ketch the idee?"

"Yep, I understand all that," responded the other.

Presently Ned asked what he should do if there was any resistance.

"Oh! they won't make no trouble o' that kind. The constable will take care o' that."

"Tell yo' what it is, dad, I'd mighty well like to lick that boy afore they git out o' the neighborhood. He's the most stuck-up feller fer poor trash I ever seen. If he puts in his oar to-day I'll punch his head sure as shootin'."

"He's pretty sassy, that's a fac', and under gen'ral carcumstances I'd hav' no objection to your whalin' him, but to-day you jes' hold yer-self in. It might interfere with my plans. You'll have a chance yet."

The warlike son finally promised his sire that for the time being he would restrain his thirst for battle, and, mounting his horse, he joined Job Firth, the constable, and the colored man Pete, who had been employed to assist with the lifting. The party proceeded at once to the cottage.

Mrs. Ambler and Nellie caught sight of the constable's buggy at the same moment and easily recognized the accompanying horseman.

Singularly enough Mrs. Ambler's nervousness disappeared when her fears had become a certainty. As she recognized Ned Tull, however, she felt that there was danger that Harry might lose his self-control and get into some encounter which would injure himself, and accomplish no good result.

A glance at her boy's compressed lips and flushed cheeks did not reassure her. Crossing the room she placed her arm about him.

"Remember, Harry, you are the only protector left to Nellie and me. You must be wise. Nothing that these people will do can hurt us much, but a rash act of yours might give us a lifetime of regret."

The boy's look softened as it rested upon his mother. He was very proud of her, and

he realized that her quiet courage was far more grand than any deeds of physical prowess that would come in his way on that day.

“Don’t fear, mother. Unless things go worse than I expect, I sha’n’t take any part to-day. Our time will come.”

The official party had now arrived, and Ned Tull lost no time in useless delay. He knocked at the door with cheerful promptness, and did not indulge in friendly greetings of any kind when it was opened.

“I’ve come fer the rent. Seventy-five dollars.”

“I’m very sorry, but I have not been able to get the money, even by borrowing. You know what terrible sorrow has come upon us within the last—”

“Well, now, you can jes’ knock right off on that tune in the beginning. The bad luck dodge don’t work on me, nor dad neither. He didn’t drowned yer man, an’ he says he aint goin’ to let yo’ make yer high-toned funeral expenses no excuse fer cheating him out o’ his rent.”

The coarseness of this speech stung Mrs. Ambler to the quick, but with rare presence

of mind she turned towards Harry, just in time to help him keep his promise of peace. Even the constable, to whom coarse speech was no novelty, felt the unnecessary brutality of Ned's words, and showed strong signs of impatience.

"I s'pose we come here fer business, and I'd be glad to git it done," growled he.

"Well, then pitch right in, nobody's holdin' you, be they?" and Ned set the example by commencing to remove the dishes, preparatory to taking out the table.

"Here, Pete, jest hook on here and we'll land her over the fence in a second and a half."

As the table was being moved, Ned, who was backing towards the door, stumbled against an old chair. Instead of pushing it to one side he gave it a kick that sent it against the wall and demolished one of its legs.

"That rubbish might as well go out in two pieces as one," said he, with a sneer.

My young readers may not easily understand how anybody could have their feelings very much hurt by rough treatment or harsh language applied to an old chair, which was certainly neither very valuable nor ornamen-

tal. Yet Mrs. Ambler felt the tears start to her eyes as she looked at the wreck. She remembered the evening her husband had spent in making that chair when they first came to the "Crossing," and felt too poor to expend a dollar that might be saved by their own work. They had both laughed at its clumsy appearance when it was done, but it had served them faithfully ever since, and she would have handled it tenderly in memory of the past.

At the sight of this rough destruction of their home, Nellie broke down.

"Oh, Mr. Tull! must we go? won't your father give us just a little more time? I'm sure we can get the rent somehow."

Ned thought that this was probably his best chance to follow out the instructions about which his father had been so particular. So he paused in his work.

"Well, now, dad tol' me to say this here to you people. If the hull lot o' you'll git out o' this neighborhood fer good and never show your faces here ag'in, why he'll give yu ten days to git yer duds together, an' he'll let the rent go. Them's his best terms—only except this, ef you're all so poor you'd have to beg your way, why he'll get tickets fer ye. That's his best."

He paused to allow the full size of the offer to be understood. Ned had intended to comply faithfully with his father's directions, but it will be seen that he had certainly not presented the matter in a very persuasive form.

Harry took it upon himself to reply.

"Tell your father that we don't see any good reason for running away from the place in which we've lived so long. We'll stay here and be respected long after people have found out what kind of a man he is."

"Look here, young fellow, you'd jest better hold yer jaw, er it may git hurt. When I want to hear from you why I'll speak to you. How is it, mam—do you go or stay?"

"I can see no good reason for our going away, so soon at any rate. Why does your father wish it?"

Ned was not prepared to answer this question. In point of fact he had been puzzling over the very same query. He had a response, however, which he took great pleasure in making, not so much for its truth as for its application.

"Why, he don't like that cub's sass," pointing with his thumb at Harry. "He says he's a disgrace to the place, an' he's right, too."

"We will not leave the neighborhood," responded Mrs. Ambler, quietly, but with a decision which at once made it clear even to Ned that the matter was settled.

"Job, move the rest o' this truck out o' here double quick. Don't waste no time lookin' fer soft spots to drop the things."

The constable was glad to get down to business, and he now set to work in real earnest to perform his duty according to law. He, however, took occasion to suggest to Mrs. Ambler that she should get together such of her smaller articles as were most valuable, to avoid the danger of loss or injury. She gladly acted upon this hint, as it enabled herself and children to keep employed, thus avoiding the pain that would have been caused by standing idly by and witnessing that which they could not help.

Ned Tull made himself boisterously active in giving orders, and seemed to have at his command an unlimited number of contemptuous expressions.

In his language, the contents of the bureau drawers were "trash," the kitchen utensils were "rubbish," and the bed clothing was "rags."

Fortunately this state of things did not last long. The constable was naturally anxious to make short work of a disagreeable job.

Fortunately, also, the wagon of the miller was now seen coming down the road at a rate that was entirely new in the history of the little bay mare. Mr. Conner had but little to say. Indeed, when he recalled the confidence of his prediction that the landlord would not do exactly what he had done, he did not see much that he could say. He was, however, ready enough to act, which was more to the point. Hastily greeting Mrs. Ambler and Nellie, he turned to Harry.

"Lend a hand here, my lad, and we'll put this table into the wagon in short order. You're all going right along with me."

By this time the house was empty, and the constable turned over the keys to Ned Tull.

"There, I reckon that 'are writ's sarved, an' there's your possession o' the premises."

"Yep, she's all right now, an' by the bye, Firth, jest notice the time. It's not quite a quarter arter eleven, and your time's your own. Don't try to charge it onto the ol' man, he won't stand it. You're free to be doin' whatever yo' want to."

"That 'are's all right. Me an' the ol' man won't split on the fees," and the constable and his helper sauntered out towards the gate.

A minute later, and Ned opened his eyes in astonishment and disgust. Firth and Pete had each laid aside their coats and were helping the miller to load the household furniture into his wagon. Nor was Ned's humor improved by the appearance at this time of Tom Tabor, one of Harry's school friends, who had chanced to be driving by. As soon as Tom understood the situation, he insisted upon having a load. The result was that in a very few minutes the two wagons, with all of the household furniture and the family, were moving quietly up the road.

"By gingo!" muttered Ned, as he viewed the departing procession, "this here won't suit the old man fer a cent. Why, blame it all, it looks jes' as if the widder was a-goin' to hav' moved anyway to-day without payin' no rent, an' she's worked it on dad mighty slick. She's got him to send the constable an' a nigger an' me to tote out her duds in a awful big hurry at his expense, an' without no particular trouble to her. I reckon the old man'll kick, when he hears it."

After a few moments, however, his spirits rose. Stepping into the cottage, he quietly opened a closet-door and brought forth a good-sized piece of drawing paper upon which was a crayon portrait of Mr. Ambler. It was the best work of Nellie's loving hands, and was the only likeness of her father that the bereaved family now possessed. Mr. Ambler had been proud of it during his lifetime, and since his death it had, of course, become the dearest of household treasures. It had been carefully stowed away to await the time that Mrs. Ambler should feel able to have it suitably framed.

Ned Tull, alone, knew how so precious a thing had chanced to be left behind.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE FALLS MILL

THE prompt and kindly aid of Mr. Conner and Tom Tabor did so much to relieve their anxiety as to the immediate future, that Mrs. Ambler and her children found themselves much more cheerful than would have seemed possible an hour before.

"Your kindness makes one feel as if there is a pleasant side even to misfortune," said she, in acknowledgment of the miller's action.

"It would be a mighty poor world, Mrs. Ambler, if a body was na glad to do a little kindness to such as yourself and the bairns," replied he. "There's na telling how soon the tables may be turned on ony of us."

So they drove along until they reached the foot of the Falls' grade, where everybody found it necessary to dismount and lighten the loads for the horses. The two boys and Mr. Conner further relieved the faithful animals by each carrying a portion of the load

upon his own shoulders. By this means the party soon arrived at the miller's home, and the household furniture, which but an hour before had been cast into the highway, was placed in secure quarters. The excitement was over.

Tom Tabor and Harry had a talk out by the mill before Tom left for home. Harry felt that he might now relieve his mind upon the subject of their landlord without having to repent of his folly. Like most boys of his age, our hero was not always an example of moderation in his language.

"I'd like to break old Tull's head," he remarked as he threw a stone at a stump by the roadside with an accuracy that would have accomplished his wish if the stump had been the head.

"He's an old hog, and no mistake. Let's get even on him," suggested Tom.

"I'll tell you what I'm agoing to do, Tom, and I wish you'd help me. I want to find out what that old scoundrel means by his efforts to drive us away from the Crossing. There's something back of it all, or he'd never in the world offered us money. It aint his style."

"It did look a little like water running up

hill, that's a fact. Perhaps his mind is giving way," suggested Tom, with the hope of getting Harry into a less savage mood before leaving him.

"Well, if it's giving away anything of value, you may expect it to get it back again somehow," responded Harry, in the same spirit.

"Say, Harry, you just work up some plan for getting even on the old rat, and count me in when you're ready to spring it. I'll stick to you through thick and thin."

"I don't believe, Tom, that it's just exactly getting even that I care about. I wouldn't want to burn his house, or frighten his horse, or do anything else that I couldn't own up to, though I believe I did say something about breaking his head just now."

"Well, you can depend on me anyway, in anything that you get up. Good-bye until next time."

"Good-bye, Tom, and we're all a thousand times obliged to you for to-day."

Tom drove carefully down the grade and off towards home.

It was impossible to very long resist the cheerful influence of the hearty Scotch couple,

and the new arrivals were soon as much at home as if their moving had been a matter of deliberate arrangement.

Harry and his sister found the place one of great interest to them, and they wandered out to take a look at the mill with its massive water-wheel.

The old mill stood on the bank of a creek that came down from the Alleghenys, and which at this point had not yet entirely lost its wild character as a mountain stream. It still flowed with such volume and force that the great wheel would easily have driven two mills instead of one. The miller had frequently puzzled his brain for some method of making full use of the splendid water-power.

Just below the mill-wheel the stream descended to the bed of the valley, along which it flowed more peacefully to the great river which carried its waters to the sea. The descent to the low ground was quite sudden and was accomplished by means of a number of very pretty little cascades. As Harry and Nellie stood by the foot of this watery stairway, and looked upwards, they saw the giant wheel seemingly engaged in a perpetual struggle to climb higher up the stream and

thus escape from the upper cascade which was forever trying to drag it over the falls. From its situation the place had long been known as the Falls Mill.

The only available way of reaching the mill itself from the valley below was up along the steep wagon road which had been built directly beside the falls. This road was not over a hundred and fifty feet in length, and had been kept in good repair, but it was necessarily so steep that its ascent was a continual matter of complaint to the farmers who hauled their wheat to the mill. The grade was so sharp that after starting to ascend it, a loaded team could not stop to rest on the way without the precaution of blocking the wheels. When the mill was erected, a generation before the opening of our story, most of the hauling in the locality had been done by oxen, and these slow and powerful animals had found no particular difficulty in reaching the mill. The magnificent water-power at this high point had outweighed the inconvenience of the ascent.

As our hero and Nellie were silently admiring the natural beauty of the place, they were startled by a horseman, who dashed by

them and turned up towards the mill. His horse had nearly touched them as he went by, and they heard something very like an oath as he glanced back over his shoulder. It was Mr. Tull.

"That means more trouble for Mr. Conner," said Nellie, as she looked after the excited rider.

"I am afraid it does, and I wish we had some way of preventing it," replied her brother, "but I don't see how we can."

"Harry, why does that man want us to go away? If it was his rent that he cared for he would certainly want us where he could collect it. What can he want?"

"I don't know what he wants, Nell, but I am more certain every minute that he has some secret reason of his own for trying to drive us away from the Crossing."

"Let's ask him right out," suggested Nellie.

"Let's not," responded Harry, with a smile at the idea of expecting any such candor from Mr. Tull. "No, asking won't reach it, but I'll keep my ears and eyes wide open, and if it's possible I'm going to find it all out."

"I expect, Harry, he's talking to Mr. Con-

ner at this very moment about sending us away."

As they passed the mill door on their way to the house, they heard the voices of the two men in excited conversation on the inside. The miller had recognized Mr. Tull long before he had reached the Falls, and not wishing to carry on an angry controversy in the house, he had made it convenient to be busy at the mill when the landlord arrived.

Heat, anger, and dust had all left their marks upon the latter as he dismounted and tossed his horse's bridle over the post in front of the mill. He omitted the customary greetings between neighbors and plunged at once into business.

"A fine day's work you've made of it, Conner, sticking your fingers into other people's business. What in thunder do you mean by it anyway?"

"You're doubtless referring to the widow Ambler's affairs?" asked Mr. Conner, as if in actual doubt as to the other's meaning.

"Yes, I am, and I'd like to know what right you've got on my land, interfering with the law."

"I went to lend a hand to the widow and

children you be turning out," replied the other, simply, "and if there's either of us to be ashamed of the day's work, I reckon it's yourself."

"Oh, don't tune up for none o' yer sam-singin'. I jest come over on a plain piece o' business, and I can put it mighty clear, too. It was your interferin' as kept me and the widow from agreein' to terms about her leavin' the Crossin'. Now you've just got to undo yer own mischief, that's all. If they aint all away from here by this day week it'll be a pers'nal matter twixt you an' me. Yo' understand?"

"Weel, they won't be away," replied Conner, decidedly, "so that settles that right here."

"No, it don't settle it by a long shot," responded the angry visitor.

Mr. Tull had doubtless intended to have had a longer conversation with the miller, but he saw that there was no possibility of persuading him to take the action which he desired, and he found himself too much excited for argument. Snatching the horse's bridle from the post, he sprang into the saddle, and turned fiercely upon the miller. Shaking his

clenched fist at Mr. Conner, he leaned forward and yelled :

“You beggarly, sam-singing Scotchman, I’ll make this the worst bit o’ meddlin’ you’ve ever been up to. I’ll build a mill *that don’t need no ladder to climb up to*. I’ll drive that crowd o’ paupers away from here in spite of all you can do. Now, you jest remember what I’m tellin’ you.”

Before the astonished miller could reply, Tull was off down the road. Mr. Conner gazed after him with a look rather of trouble than anger upon his usually cheerful countenance. As the rider disappeared, at the turn of the road, he drew a long breath and walked slowly towards the house.

“I ha’ been expecting that threat for nigh on to ten year now, but I’d rather it would ha’ come from a better man than Jerry Tull.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE DAMAGED PICTURE

OF course there was much curiosity in the household to know the object and result of Mr. Tull's visit. The miller related it all pretty faithfully, but touched most lightly upon that which really gave him the most concern.

"He be going to build another mill and spoil our living, so he says."

This was the only reference that he made to Tull's savage threat, but Harry saw clearly enough that it was not a trifling matter to the miller, and he determined to learn more about it at the earliest opportunity.

"Mr. Conner," said Mrs. Ambler presently, "this trouble and ill feeling all comes from your having helped us in our distress, and it isn't right to let you bear our misfortunes. We had better go."

"Tut, tut," spoke up the miller, turning towards Mrs. Ambler, with his hands extended

as if in explanation, "there be na room for sic notions here. Why, the old wheel would stop still with astonishment to see a widow an' her children leaving the place because Gregory Conner dare na longer give them shelter."

"Of course, of course, ye all stay here till ye see the place that suits you better," broke in Mrs. Conner, heartily seconding her husband's expressions of kindness.

"It's a pleasure to see the lad and lassie about the house, and they must gang right along to school," resumed the miller.

"And ye can all be useful about the home and the mill, and we'll say no more on the subject," concluded his wife.

The sincerity of these words, and the stress of her situation, left the widow no choice but to accept the hospitality so freely offered. Of course she did not intend to remain a burden to any one, a moment longer than was absolutely necessary, but the hope of a little more schooling for Harry and Nellie was very tempting, and she accepted it with thanks. They were both bright scholars, but from the present circumstances of the family it was clear that their school days were nearly over. The mother was, therefore, very glad of their chance to finish the term.

So it came about that Ned Tull rubbed his eyes with astonishment on the next Monday morning as Harry and Nellie entered the school-room with their books under their arms and no signs of tears on their faces. They took their accustomed seats just as if nothing unusual had occurred.

The reader will easily understand that up to this point matters had not gone along exactly as young Tull had desired. In the first place, the constable had failed most miserably in the manner of taking possession of the cottage. In Ned's cheerful imagination, he had beheld a vision of broken bedsteads, splintered chairs, cracked crockery, and torn carpets, first tumbled about by a swearing constable, and then heaped together in a promiscuous mass by the public roadside. Around these were to be gathered the weeping and disconsolate family.

What he had actually seen was most disgustingly like an orderly and voluntary removal from one home to another. The family had not gone very cheerfully, it is true, yet they had by no means exhibited that crushed and hopeless appearance which Ned had naturally expected as the result of his father's

anger. Worst of all, here were the two children back at school again after an absence of only a single day.

This was a little more awkward for Ned from the fact that he had already given his particular cronies an account of the proceedings of Friday at the cottage. He had explained how young Ambler had undertaken to give him, Ned Tull, some of his impudence and had been shut up with such force that he didn't dare to open his mouth again during the whole morning. This was followed by ample explanations as to what would have happened if Harry had been rash enough to say another word. Ned had rather more than intimated that Ambler would hardly dare to make his appearance again in the speaker's presence, yet here the fellow was, and with no visible signs of past injury or present alarm. Things were not as they should be.

The financial standing of the elder Tull, together with his own self-confident manner, had given Ned Tull a kind of leadership over the other boys of the school. His recitals of past adventures and his predictions of future accomplishments were always listened to by a crowd of gaping admirers.

Of course Harry Ambler had his friends as well as Ned, but they were much less demonstrative, although certainly more sincere. His particular friend was Tom Tabor, the son of a well-to-do farmer of the neighborhood. The two boys were nearly of a size. Of the two, Harry was rather more serious in character, yet they had always found each other excellent company.

During all of the Monday recess and after school was out, Ned was constantly surrounded by a party of eager admirers. As he had it all his own way it may be safely assumed that the Amblers, and particularly Harry, were not presented in a very enviable light. Then, too, there seems to be a universal admiration among boys for what they consider pluck, and Harry's behavior as described to them, didn't come up to their ideas of bravery.

Ned indulged in some demonstrations during the day that tended to still further strengthen him among the boys. Whenever he met Harry on the school grounds he made it a point to stare full in his face and elevate his eyebrows in a contemptuous manner, without other sign of recognition. This was

regarded as at once dignified and severe. Harry's nerves were also tried occasionally by hearing the words "beggar" and "pauper," which were evidently aimed at himself. He paid no attention to these words or actions, and the day passed off without anything of importance to our narrative.

On the next morning, however, it became evident that there was something special on the Tull program. The interest among his admirers seemed to increase instead of dying out, as Harry had naturally supposed it would. The conferences were more frequent, and there was a general air of suppressed excitement among the younger boys. At noon Ned again entertained a small assemblage of friends in a corner of the school grounds with his views as to Harry.

"Fellers, you jest orter have seen Ambler when I told him he'd better shut his mouth. He seen in half a secon' that I was in earnest, and he didn't darst as much as look at me again. You never seen anybody turn so white."

"Did he cry?" asked one of the listeners.

"Oh, well, he was kind o' whimperin' all the time. There aint no sand to him, at all."

"How're you going to make him fight this afternoon?" queried another.

"Why, you'll see after school. O' course if he won't fight fer nothin', why he won't, that's all. To tell the truth that's jest what I am afraid of, but I'll call him a 'pauper,' and perhaps he'll dare to call me another, or somethin' else, an' ef he does why I'll dare him to say it again. With that kind o' fellers yo' have to go slow or else they'll pertend they don't believe in fightin' an' back out."

"Hain't you got something else to make him mad about?" asked his first questioner again.

"Yep, I have, but you jest keep that to yourself 'til it comes out."

"Ambler backed out from fighting Jim Henderson at the picnic last year," said another of the boys. "Hendy jest the same as called him a liar. Ambler turned around jest as quiet as could be, an' said that what he had said was so, but that he didn't see anything to fight about, and then he walked off with his mother."

"Oh, he's a coward. That's jest the long and short o' it all. But you fellers jest keep yer eyes open fer fun after school."

The bell rang and the scholars returned to the school-room, but not to study. Something of more importance than geography or grammar was upon their minds.

When at length school was dismissed, Nellie wished to speak to the teacher about making up the lessons missed on Friday, and Harry waited for her in the school-room. Those who had nothing of importance to detain them had disappeared by the time the brother and sister walked quietly down the path towards the gate.

Just outside of the school grounds, however, Ned Tull with a dozen others had gathered under a chestnut tree. Curious glances were cast at our hero as himself and companion passed out the gate.

"The coward's got his sister with him for an excuse," muttered Tull, "but jes' you fellers watch him any way."

There were some noticeable points of contrast between the two boys. Tull was somewhat heavier and taller, but he had not the firmness of muscle and clear skin of Harry. His motions were not so free, nor his eye so steady. Harry had not even looked towards the group, and was about to pass the chestnut

tree without notice, when a scream from Nellie caused him to look at her. Nellie was gazing at Ned Tull and his friends, and a glance in that direction explained matters to her brother.

Tull was standing with his back towards them, and was holding in his hands—so high above his head that everybody must see it—the crayon sketch of Mr. Ambler, which both the brother and sister believed to be safely at home. As soon as Ned was sure that his action was observed, he deliberately crumpled the paper in his hands and contemptuously tossed it into the road. He then turned around with a sneer on his face to witness the effect of his performance. It had produced different effects upon the different observers. Nellie had involuntarily put her hands over her eyes, as she saw the picture thrown into the road.

Harry's books had dropped to the ground, as he sprang like a young lion towards his enemy. He did not utter a word. The first audible sound was an involuntary "gosh!" from Tull himself, as he received a tremendous drive from Harry's left fist among his ribs. The effect of this was to double Ned

forward, where he was met with an upper cut from his opponent's right fist, which straightened him up, with a bloody nose.

He now became conscious of two things. First, that he had succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations in getting Harry to fight, and next that if he desired to take any part in the contest himself he must do it at once.

He was stung not only by the blows but by the recollection of the position he had placed himself in by his foolish boasting. Aiming a powerful blow at Harry, Ned now commenced an attack. The latter sprang backwards and escaped unhurt. For five minutes Ned became the aggressor, and delivered some very hard blows, and a good deal of violent language, at our hero. Neither, however, produced any noticeable result. As long as Tull was inclined to keep this up, Harry encouraged him, for he very well knew how soon such exercise would exhaust his enemy's strength.

At the end of the time mentioned, Tull showed very clearly that he could not long keep up his pace. He was breathing heavily through his open mouth, while Harry's com-

pressed lips and steady gaze told of a reserved strength that would come into play just when it would do the most harm to his excited adversary.

As we have seen, Harry had, up to this point, avoided any very severe injury by judiciously retreating or stepping to one side. Ned had grown familiar with this manœuvre, but it was not easily overcome. At length, by apparent negligence, Harry allowed his opponent to get nearer to him than had been his custom, and Tull took immediate advantage of the fact. He knew perfectly well that if he could strike Ambler one full blow with his right fist he would be very apt to disable him and gain an easy victory. Seeing his chance to accomplish this, he leaped towards the smaller boy with a blow that would have been apt to have reached him even if he had retreated as usual.

This life, however, is full of changes, and it was just here that Ned encountered one of the most violent. Harry had not only expected, but desired this attack. Instead of retreating he advanced upon his approaching enemy. Warding off the latter's blow with his left forearm, he met the advancing form

with a drive of his right fist fully between the eyes. The result of the contact was what might have been expected under the circumstances. Tull was not in position to endure the effect of such a shock, and his feet flew from under him with that surprising velocity which can be appreciated only by those who have chanced to experience it. He fell at full length on the grass, with the eyes of his followers fixed upon his prostrate form.

He arose to his feet and clenched his fists. A close observer must, however, have noticed that he did not advance with that eager step which had characterized his former attacks.

Now our hero took no particular pleasure in fighting, even when he remembered the insults which had been heaped upon himself and family by this boy. He was therefore very glad of an opportunity to bring the battle to an early close, and he believed that prompt action would accomplish this result.

Advancing quickly to his antagonist, Harry struck him a sounding blow across the cheek with his open hand, and then stood before him with his own hands by his side. The blow was, of course, far less forcible than those which had preceded it, but its meaning was

very clear. The spectators understood that the battle might stop or continue entirely as Tull decided, but that if it stopped, there was to be no manner of doubt as to who was the victor.

The bully stood for a moment considering what to do. A glance at the figure of his undaunted opponent, who stood quietly awaiting his pleasure in the matter, greatly assisted him in reaching a conclusion. Backing slowly away for a few steps, he turned and left the field of battle. He was whipped.

After standing a moment to allow for any change of purpose on Ned's part, our hero quietly passed through the line of now respectful spectators and picked up the much abused paper which had brought about the conflict. Joining Nellie, he tenderly smoothed out the beloved features and restored the treasure to his sister.

"There, Nell, it aint so bad after all, and I guess I've damaged his picture as much as he has yours."

CHAPTER IX

THE MILLER'S ALARM

WHEN Nellie laid the rescued picture before her astonished mother the whole story of the encounter came out.

"Mother, Harry had a prize-fight," said the girl, intending to put the occurrence in its worst shape to begin with, so that the explanations might have the greater weight with her mother, who she knew was opposed to fighting.

"And Nellie was my second," added her brother.

Then, of course, came a full explanation of the battle and its immediate cause.

"My boy," said Mrs. Ambler, when she had heard it all, "couldn't you have avoided it by just bringing the picture home and paying no attention to the insults?"

"It wouldn't have been right," responded the boy with decision.

"Why not, Harry?" asked Mrs. Ambler,

surprised that her son should actually justify his conduct. She had, of course, expected that he would excuse himself on the ground of sudden anger, but she hardly expected him to maintain that he had done a good act in undertaking a fist fight.

"I know, mother, you always speak against fighting, and if it isn't necessary, I dislike it as much as any one possibly can. But I think it may sometimes be just as necessary as to carry a barrel, or saw a stick of wood, and this was one of those times."

"How was it necessary, my boy? What good has been accomplished by whipping Ned Tull?"

"All the good that was possible to accomplish under the circumstances. Why just look at it, mother, for a moment, as if we had nothing to do with the matter at all, but that it was all about other people. One boy does some outrageous thing—an act that nobody can justify. His action will be a success or failure in his opinion according to the result to himself. In other words, he is not a boy who will care at all how much his act hurts other people, if it only makes him popular, or brings him money, or in any other way produces a pleasant result at once.

"Now, mother, suppose you could control the result of his act so as to make it a decided failure even in the opinion of the boy himself. What ought you to do?"

"But, Harry, it is not your duty to take care of Ned Tull."

"Perhaps not, mother, but it is my duty to do the best I can for everybody when I am in a position that my action affects them, and here it did. If I had passed this over, Ned Tull would have been encouraged to do just such things in the future, and perhaps next time his victim would not have been able to defend himself. I have presented to Ned the only argument against that kind of thing that he can possibly understand. I have turned a very bad act into a very bad failure. He will doubtless keep on being a mean boy, but I have done my duty so far at any rate."

"With it all, my son, fighting continues to be a brutalizing thing."

"Yes, if it is done for any bad reason, but when it is the only argument that is applicable to the case, I think it's right," persisted the boy.

"And my own sentiments be exactly the same," broke in the miller. "The doubts

about the rights o' the case trouble me less than to tell how the lad happened to be so handy with his fists."

"His father had him taught to box, against my objections," replied Mrs. Ambler. "Mr. Ambler used to say that most of the fights among boys came from their discussions as to which could whip, and that if a boy had been trained to take care of himself whenever it became necessary, he would not care to fight for slight motives. He said that it was the same as among men. The man who is entirely sure that his financial credit is secure, is not so much tempted to make an unnecessary display of his money as is the one about whom there is some doubt."

"Weel, you can na call Harry a quarrelsome lad."

"No, I can't do that. Harry is a good boy, and perhaps he's right about a blow being sometimes necessary, but I hope it will not be often."

So the matter ended with the family.

Whether or not any particular change took place in Ned's character, one thing is certain, his influence for evil among the younger boys at the school was ended. His defeat had been

so thorough, and his previous boasting had attracted so much attention to it, that he was no longer a possible object of admiration. He attempted some explanations but they were not satisfactory.

He attributed his defeat to the fact that Harry had struck him "before a single word had been spoke about fightin'." He also tried to continue his former tactics of making a public show of his contempt for our hero by staring at him with disdain when they met. But there was a difference now. It is not so easy for a boy with a blackened eye and numerous court-plaster decorations on his cheek to assume the look of dignity necessary for a successful snub. His efforts were still greeted with smiles by the other boys, but he was in painful doubt as to the exact object of their mirth.

Ned's hatred of Harry was certainly increased many-fold by his recent experience. He did not suffer from any desire to renew the combat in the same form, but he would have heartily adopted any secret method by which he could have had his revenge.

The elder Tull soon observed his son's increased hatred for young Ambler, and he de-

terminated to turn it to use. He knew too much to entrust Ned with his own reasons for particularly wishing to get the family out of the way, yet he felt the need of his son's aid in carrying out any of the plans devised by the notary and himself.

He was satisfied now that the offer of the railroad tickets was not alone sufficient to accomplish his end, and he determined to add some more powerful inducement at the earliest opportunity. With a plan already in view, he awaited a favorable time for enlisting his hopeful son in its execution. He thought it better to let Ned seem to invite the suggestions instead of having them forced upon him.

The chance finally came one afternoon, when the two had been taking a look at the site of the new mill which was to be erected on the Ambler farm. They had wandered into the deserted cottage, and the surroundings seemed to have put Ned in a peculiarly fortunate mood for taking his father's suggestions. Due respect for our friends at the Falls requires, however, that we should first notice some events occurring before the day of which we have just spoken.

Harry and Nellie continued to attend school,

and both Mrs. Ambler and her children turned in and worked with a will to aid in every possible way, the friends who had been so kind to them. Mrs. Conner commenced to complain that she wasn't allowed to do any work even in her own house. So the kindly relations strengthened as the two families became the better acquainted.

About a week after the meeting with Ned Tull, Harry and the miller had a talk about the new mill that was to be built. Mr. Conner was seated on the platform of his own mill smoking his brier-wood pipe, and Harry had just strolled out from the house. It was after supper, and the sun was slowly dropping out of sight behind the western woods.

"Mr. Conner," said Harry, "there aint business around the Crossing for two grist-mills, is there?"

His companion started at the question, simple as it was. It was upon his own mind at that very moment, and, indeed, had been there very often of late.

"No, my lad, there aint, and, to tell the truth, that fact be giving me mony an anxious thought."

"But what will Tull do with another mill

if there isn't business enough for it to run on? Your customers won't leave you to go to Tull, I feel sure of that."

"I wish I war' sure o' that, too," said the miller dubiously.

Both were silent for a moment, then the man dropped from his seat on the edge of the platform to the ground. Stooping down he picked up a rounded stone somewhat larger than his fist. Covering the bowl of his pipe with his left hand to prevent its contents from being disturbed by the shock of his motion, he threw the stone towards the steep roadway which reached the high ground but a short distance from his feet.

The stone rolled for several rods down the smooth decline, making its movements heard as it progressed. The miller listened to the sound until it died away, and then, giving a vigorous tug at his pipe to renew the fire, he again mounted his perch.

"Lad, right there's just where the whole trouble o' the matter lies. The Falls grade be o'er-steep for horses."

"You think that the farmers will go to the mill on the lower ground rather than climb the grade?" said Harry, now for the first time

seeing the force of Tull's threat to build a new mill.

"I reckon that's what I'd do myself, lad, if I war a farmer, and it's likely others will do the same. If we were both on even ground I think the business would still stay with me, but it's too much to count on when one looks at that grade."

"Oh, I don't believe he'll build the mill," responded Harry, more cheerfully. "It'll mean a lot o' cash to begin with, and Tull aint the man to risk much money unless he sees how it's coming back to him."

"So I've been thinking, but it turns out to be a mistake. I find that he has already been getting figures from Philadelphia on the cost, so I take it he's in earnest. I reckon he's figured it all out and concluded that he can make it pay in money as well as spite."

Mr. Conner considerately did not tell Harry of a message which had come to him that very day. While it did not come directly from Tull, he had no doubt as to the source. It was a renewal of the old story. If Mrs. Ambler and the children were sent away within the week the new mill would not be built, otherwise it was a certainty. The miller realized that this was probably his last chance

to make his own peace at the expense of the family that was now under his roof, but he had declined it, and now refrained from even mentioning it lest it cause needless pain.

"And they do say, lad, that the surveyors be already marking off the mill-site on your old place, just where the stream crosses the meadow."

"Well, that's all news to me," said the boy, "and I must admit that it looks like business."

"Yes, I guess we'll have to count on two mills, but, Harry, there's another thing I've been wanting to speak about," and the miller's voice indicated a change of subject.

"For the last few days I've noticed you've been going off for two or three hours, just after school. I ken it's all right as far as ony intention is concerned, but I've been afraid, Harry, that you might be thinking o' doing something that would make you trouble. Taking a short road to getting even on Tull, perhaps?"

"Oh, I'll tell you all about it with pleasure, only I'd rather you wouldn't mention it in the house. It would just raise hopes that might only be disappointed. You remember that when father was drowned he had nearly

twenty-six hundred dollars with him, and we never found any of it. Then you'll remember that the boy who found his body was suspected of having stolen the money, and as soon as he heard that they were after him he ran away.

"Now, I've always thought that after the thing had quieted down a little the boy might come back again, and that if I could only get to talk with him I might get at least a part of the money, and you know how we need it.

"So Tom Tabor and myself have been putting in all of our spare time in watching the cabin in the woods, to see whether he hadn't come back. So far we have not caught a glimpse of him."

"Would you ken the chap if you saw him?"

"Oh, yes; I've seen him out along the Mountville road, and would know him, but I feel pretty sure that he wouldn't know me, as I never happened to speak to him."

"Weel, what ha' you learned about him so far, lad?"

"I've not talked to the old woman he lived with because I don't care to have her know that I am on the lookout, but the colored

people over about Bramble Town all think that he has gone to Philadelphia."

"Then, lad, there's mighty little hope o' seeing him again. There's so much grist in that hopper that it'll be a miracle when you find the very grain you're after."

"I'm not so sure of that, Mr. Conner, and I'd like to try the experiment. If I ever have the chance I'll do it, too."

"Weel, I'm sure I wish you success in whatever you try, lad, but I greatly fear there's naught but disappointment in the last o' the plans."

"That's the reason I hope you won't speak of it to anybody about the house, and then there won't be much harm done. What you've said about the new mill being on our old place, Mr. Conner, makes me feel as if I'd like to see the house once more before it loses the home look. If Tom feels like going that way to-morrow afternoon, it's likely we'll spend an hour or two there instead of watching the cabin."

"Just as you like, lad, and you understand that my questions did na mean that I doubted the rights of your actions."

The miller knocked the ashes out of his pipe and the two turned towards the house.

CHAPTER X

IN THE DESERTED COTTAGE

IT was late on the afternoon of the next day when Harry and Tom strolled down the familiar lane and opened the cottage gate.

"It seems awfully queer," remarked our hero, "to be going in here with the feeling that I am a stranger. It seems but a few days since we were all of us—father along with the rest—planning how we would change these garden walks as soon as the place was actually bought."

"Well, old fellow," said his companion, cheerfully, "don't go back to find bad luck. There's no telling what good fortune there may be in store for you in the future."

"That's true enough, Tom, and besides, I've no doubt that other people who are just as good as we are, have had just as hard a time."

The boys walked slowly around the grounds, commenting upon the familiar objects as they went. At the side nearest to the creek they

stopped and, resting their arms upon the fence, gazed down towards the stream.

"Tom, do you see those fresh stakes driven into the ground down there where the creek comes out of the woods?"

"Why, yes. What do you suppose they mean. Is the old fellow starting a graveyard?"

"That's exactly where the new mill is going to be."

"Well, he's mighty prompt about it, I must say."

Soon the two friends turned towards the house. Finding one of the windows unfastened, they yielded to the temptation and entered. The echoes of their own footsteps were the only sounds that greeted them as they wandered from one deserted room to another. Harry had but little to say, and his friend, fully understanding his silence, did not disturb him.

When they had visited all of the rooms on the lower floor, Harry led the way upstairs to the little room which for so many years he had called his own. Raising the western window, the two boys seated themselves upon an empty box and watched the sun as it disap-

peared behind the tall chestnuts that were gently nodding their evening farewell.

The reader can easily imagine the character of the conversation at such a place and under such circumstances, and as more active incidents await us, we shall not pause to repeat the hopes and fears that the two friends discussed with each other.

They must have talked for a considerable time, for the shadows of the tall trees were reaching far across the meadow, when Tom gave a sudden start and pointed through the open window towards the edge of the woods. Harry was not at first able to make out the object of his friend's attention.

"What is it, Tom?"

"If I'm not mistaken it's Tull's big dog 'Brock.' See, he's just dodging out of the woods along the bank of the creek."

"I see him now. What's the ugly brute doing down here alone, I wonder?"

"Most likely he aint alone," replied Tom. "There, I thought so."

As he was speaking, Mr. Tull and Ned emerged from the woods, also following the course of the stream. They were in no hurry, and stopped for some time, to

examine the spot marked off for the mill. The two boys had at once withdrawn from the window upon the discovery of the new arrivals, and now stood considering what to do. They of course knew that if their presence was discovered, Mr. Tull would put the worst possible construction upon their conduct. There was no way of escape without almost certain recognition. The window through which they must pass was in full view of the party by the creek, including the dog "Brock," who was known to be savage when excited.

"Perhaps they will not come to the house," suggested Tom.

"But here they come," replied his companion, who had been taking a peep through the window.

"We're in for it," said Tom.

"Take off your shoes," was Harry's only reply.

Our hero was one of those boys who seem to enjoy a touch of danger. His mind and his appearance at once brightened up to meet sudden difficulties, and at such times he was very apt to become the leader by mere force of ability.

Tom Tabor at once recognized the soundness of his advice on the present occasion, and the boys had each removed his shoes before the sound of the door-key informed them that their visitors had arrived. Without this precaution the bare floors would certainly have made their presence known.

The conversation and actions of the father and son were as distinct to the boys' ears as if all four had been in the same room. They passed from one room to another, opening all the closet doors, and making a thorough inspection as they went along. They had evidently been walking for some time, and the heavier of the two, complained of being tired. He seated himself on the steps that led to the second floor, to rest, and at the same time, to make known to Ned his proposition for getting even with Harry.

That youth was in excellent humor for hearing any such plan, and the matter had evidently already received some consideration at their hands.

"Wall, then, why don't you jes' get even on him?" were the first words that were understood by the boys above.

"Why don't I get even? Why don't I fly?

Why didn't you drive 'em away from the Crossing?"

"That 'are's entirely def'rent. That takes time, but I'll do it afore long, you kin count on that."

"Yes, well, so'll I git even on that there cub sometime, too, but I've got to wait fer a chance, aint I?"

"No, you aint," responded the elder Tull with increased confidence of manner. "You kin make the chance fer your own self."

"How kin I? You don't mean fer me to pitch in ter lick him ag'in, do you?" asked the other, with something like alarm in his tone.

"Naw, I don't b'lieve that fist fightin' is the way to handle sich people."

"It's too good fer 'em," virtuously responded Ned.

"Yes, the only way to fight sich people is the same way they fight."

"But I don't want to fight at all," broke in Ned, who feared that the plan might after all involve some disagreeable features.

"Wall, you jest keep down fer a few minits, till you understand what it is I'm explainin' to you. There's mor'n one way o' fightin'.

There's fist fightin', that's the lowest kind of all, an' I'm glad a son o' mine don't want no more o' that."

The two boys upstairs looked at each other and found it not at all easy to control their desire to laugh as they heard this declaration of principle. The conversation, however, became more and more interesting, and they soon forgot the humorous features.

"But, Edward," continued the parent, "there's a better kind o' fightin'."

"Yer mean rastlin', don't yer, dad—every feller grabbin' fer the best holt?"

"No, I don't mean rastlin'. What I mean is this here. You said Ambler struck you while you wasn't ready fer him, didn't you?"

"Yes, and he did, too."

"And he licked you like blazes, didn't he?" asked Tull, descending suddenly from the highly moral to the merely practical.

Ned paid no attention to the last remark, and his father proceeded.

"Now it's jest as fair fer you to hit him back when he aint expectin' it, an' get even on—"

"But I don't want to fight no more with him. I tol' you that before. I won't fight him nohow."

"Oh, jest hold your tongue fer long enough to hear me, won't you? I don't mean to hit him back in the nose, or jaw. I mean to strike him where he's tenderer than in them places."

"In the stomach?" asked Ned, this time with confidence that he had caught his father's idea at last. Figurative language was not very common in their daily conversation, and Ned was not to blame for his slowness in following it.

A grunt of disgust from his paternal relative warned him that he had not yet entirely mastered his meaning.

"I mean to hit him in his 'repetation,' that's what I mean," despairing of all hope of reaching his point by anything less direct. "Them Amblers has al'ays made a great p'int about their bein' honest, and all that. Now jes' suppose that 'ere boy was to be caught a-stealin'. Don't you see it would hit 'em all mighty hard. I don't b'lieve they could stay around here a week after it was knowd."

"Has he been stealin' somethin'?" the boys heard Ned ask in confidential tones.

"I haint no kind o' doubt that he has," replied Tull, "only he's took care not to git caught in it, that's all. Now if we could kind

o' make things work out so's to show people what kind of feller he really is, I rather reckon you'd be even on him, don't you?"

"Why, how do yer mean, dad?" inquired the still doubtful son.

"Jest this way," responded his father, with a promptness that showed that he had now reached a point that had been carefully considered before. "About a month from now you have a big time at school, on closin' day, don't you?"

"Yas, I reckon."

"Everybody and all his relations will be there. Now jest you suppose that on that there day I should be robbed o' some val'able article—like a purse, or somethin'—and I made a awful big fuss about it, so's everybody knowd it. Now if on the very next day when everybody was a-talkin' about it, the constable—not me, but the reg'lar constable—was to find that 'are article hid around Conner's mill, how would that look to you? You wouldn't think the old sam-singer took it himself, an' there's only one other one as could be suspected. Don't you see?"

"Dad, that's a good one. It would do me a sight o' good to see Ambler when he was took. He wouldn't hold his head quite so stiff."

"Now, Ned, there's one thing more to be spoke about. I think that you catch the general idee, but there's some things as will have to be looked after kind o' particular. You know purses an' sich articles aint got no legs, and they can't get up hill alone. If they are to be found anywheres around the old mill, why either Ambler or somebody else must take 'em there. You see how it is?"

"Oh, I see it all plain enough now, and you can be dead sure that Ambler—or somebody else—will take the thing up the hill the very night after it's stole. I jest know that fer sure."

"All right, Ned, the matter must be 'tended to prompt or it won't be no good, but if the carcumstances turns out the way I feel in my bones there goin' to, why you'll be even enough to last fer a lifetime."

"And I say, dad?"

"Wall, what's struck you?"

"Why, jest suppose that 'are purse was found wrapped up in a handkerchief or some-thin', and that handkerchief happened to have Ambler's name on to one corner o' it. How'd that strike a unprejerdiced observer?"

"That's one fer you, my son. That's jest

the one idee that's needed to make the surroundin's altogether lovely. If that thing was to happen jest that way the boy's own mother b'lieve he took it. She couldn't git away from the evidence, but I'll bet a dollar that the whole lot o' them would git away from the Crossing mighty rapid."

"Say, dad, it's gettin' dark. Be you goin' upstairs. I don't b'lieve I care to go."

The boys above felt a sentiment of gratitude towards Ned for his influence in their favor, but they had hardly time to mentally bestow their blessing when the voice of the elder Tull greeted them again.

"Why, y-a-s; I reckon I'll see the thing through. I seed one of the windows open up there when we was comin', and then anyway I want to look in all the closets. You can't never tell what people might happen to leave in the closets."

As he was speaking, Mr. Tull had evidently arisen and, with his last words, the prisoners above heard his heavy step upon the lower stair. We need hardly say that the situation was desperate, made doubly so by the character of the conversation which they had involuntarily overheard.

With the same thought in their minds the two boys hastened to the window. Tom was in advance and reached it first. He glanced out and then turned and met Harry with a look of dismay.

"We can't do it, Harry. Old 'Brock' is right under the window and he's a regular man-eater. Take care or he'll see you. Why what on earth—you can't frighten the dog. There, we're gone."

This one-sided conversation was the result of Harry's singular conduct, and it all took place in a few breathless seconds. When Tom turned from facing the savage brute beneath the window and told his companion of the hopelessness of attempting escape in that direction, our hero seemed to lose his self-possession. Rushing forward to the window-sill he leaned far out and at once attracted the attention of the half-sleeping dog.

Then followed his efforts at intimidation. Shaking his fist at the astonished animal, he had him on his feet in an instant. Then he dangled his shoes by their strings over the dog's head. No self-respecting mastiff would endure this insult in silence, and "Brock's" furious barking greeted his master while the



NO SELF-RESPECTING MASTIFF WOULD ENDURE THE INSULT
IN SILENCE

latter was still several steps from the upper landing of the stairs.

"Say, dad, 'Brock's' got somebody outside and it aint no use for me to holler at him. You'd better see about it right off. When he barks that way he means business."

"Hang the dog!" muttered Tull, as he stumped down the stairs again with greater speed than he had ascended.

In a moment the boys heard the two leave the house and speak to the dog on the outside.

"Come," said Harry, and Tom followed without question.

Still carrying their shoes, the boys hastily descended to the floor below and, Harry opening a closet door, they both entered and closed the door after them. They were not a second too soon. When they had disappeared from the window the dog had turned to meet his master and was easily silenced.

The father and son returned almost immediately, and Mr. Tull was soon exploring the upper rooms. They heard him open the various closet doors above, and draw down the window. Had they remained upstairs they would have been discovered, beyond all doubt.

The party very shortly left the cottage.

Our friends, however, thought it wise to remain within the house until they were sure that "Brock" was not in ambush to avenge the insults that had been heaped upon him from the window. As they were putting on their shoes, Tom referred to what they had just heard.

"Harry, the old villain is going to catch you, isn't he?"

"Yes, only he aint," was Harry's emphatic reply. "He don't get up early enough to do it—when I happen to know of his plans in advance."

During the next month the boys had ample opportunity to discuss the singular plan of which they had so singularly learned.

CHAPTER XI

THE STOLEN WATCH

THE school year was at an end and the closing day had arrived. There were to be the usual pleasures and incidents connected with such occasions, including recitations by the scholars, remarks by the visitors, and the distribution of several prizes offered by the teacher.

The day seemed to have been supplied by nature to special order. The early warmth of spring was everywhere awakening the birds and buds into joyful activity. It was such a day as would seem to suggest good-will among men by so clearly showing the good-will of God.

The school-room, which was large for a village school, was crowded to its utmost limit. Everybody seemed to have found it entirely convenient to attend. The people who had children were there as a matter of course, and the others came because they had no children to keep them at home.

Mrs. Ambler came because there was no one thing so dear to her heart as the welfare of Harry and Nellie. Mr. Tull was on hand for various reasons, among which an interest in education was not one.

It is perhaps due to this gentleman at this point to once more mention the fact that he was confidently expecting to be nominated and elected to the Legislature in the following November, and he knew that those who would reap in the autumn must not be idle in the spring. He missed no public occasion to meet, and, if possible, address the voters. It may surprise my readers to learn that, notwithstanding Mr. Tull's somewhat defective use of the English language he rather prided himself on his oratory.

"There aint no tucks an' ruffles to my speakin', I know that; but somehow I al'ays manage to say what I want to, strong enough fer the man next to me to catch the idee."

So Mr. Tull was on hand for reasons of his own.

The morning was spent in the examination of the different classes, showing the progress made during the term. At noon, the work being over, the scholars and their re-

spective friends separated into different groups beneath the trees, and the occasion assumed the appearance of a picnic.

Mr. Tull might be seen gliding about from one group to another, renewing old friendships with voters. It need not be said that the Ambler family neither sought nor received his notice.

It is not our purpose to dwell upon the varied pleasures of this occasion, nor shall we pause to describe the interesting exercises of the afternoon. To most of my young readers such scenes are doubtless familiar.

Among the many complimentary speeches made by the visitors, Mr. Tull's was not the shortest. He explained that he himself had not been so fortunate as to enjoy early advantages in the way of schooling, but that he had tried to make the best of himself through life by adhering strictly to the principles of honesty and industry. It was not for him to speak of the result.

Finally he admitted that, notwithstanding his own success without education, he was firmly convinced that for the average boy learning was a benefit.

"If it shall ever come to happen," said he,

“that I am called upon to occupy any public position where I haf to vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ about our public schools, why I will vote ‘yes’—a thousand times ‘yes.’” Satisfied from the applause that he had dropped a seed that might sprout in due time, he wisely took his seat.

Then came the distribution of the several books purchased by the teacher to be presented to the scholars whose standing had been the highest. As far as any of our friends were concerned in this portion of the exercises, we may have the pleasure of knowing that Harry Ambler received a copy of *The American Conflict*, a history of the Civil War, while Nellie was presented with a volume of *Longfellow's Poems*.

The teacher then thanked the guests for their interest and presence, and announced that the exercises were at an end. He was about to step from the platform when he was suddenly stopped by Mr. Tull.

The latter whispered something in the schoolmaster's ear which caused him to rap with his pencil upon the desk before him. The buzz of conversation which had just set in ceased at once. Clearly something was wrong.

After listening to Mr. Tull's whispered remarks for a moment, the teacher spoke.

"I am very sorry, friends," he began, "to have to add one unpleasant incident to an occasion which you have all done so much to render agreeable. Our friend, Mr. Tull, has been rob—or at least has lost his watch."

With this introduction the unfortunate Mr. Tull once more stepped upon the platform. His appearance was somewhat changed. When he had spoken a few moments before, his coat had been carefully buttoned down in front and there had been no evidence of disorder. Now, however, his coat hung loosely open and his vest showed marks of violence. His conspicuous watch chain was gone, and the buttonhole through which it had been looped was torn out.

His appearance at first raised a doubt in the minds of Harry and Tom whether he had not actually been robbed, but they soon recovered from their delusion.

"Friends, I'm mighty sorry to haf to put forward any trouble o' mine at sich a time as this, but that watch was a very val'able time-piece, and I don't by no means like the idee o' lettin' it go. If any one wants to know about the style of it, I'll jest say that it's got my initials cut on the front o' the case."

"Mr. Tull," inquired the school teacher, "can't you remember some shock when the watch was probably taken off? There must have been a good deal of force used."

The victim pondered for a moment.

"It does seem to me that I felt something of the kind somewhere, but I can't by no means make out where it was."

As everybody was taken by surprise, there were no suggestions from the audience, although there were at least two persons present who could have made some very interesting remarks upon the subject.

"Well," said the teacher, at length, "as no one has any information to offer, I suggest that when we close, all the boys set to work to make a search of the grounds, and if the watch is there I have no doubt that it will be found in five minutes."

"Jest one word more," said Mr. Tull, "as a matter o' course I'm going to use every way I can to git back that watch, and you can all see that the chances are that somehow it'll be got back. Now, I know it's jest possible that some young person might hav' took it all of a sudden for envy, or som'thin' like that, and hav' been sorry fer it right away

after it was done. If that should be the way it is, why I want to be sure that I don't do nothin' too severe. If whoever's got it will bring it to me sometime to-day I promise not ever to say a word about it, or even to ask a question. Boys has made mistakes afore this and lived 'em down."

This exhibition of charity at once pleased the audience, and Tull received more applause.

The school was then dismissed, and, not only the scholars, but many of the visitors as well, set to work to hunt for the lost watch. Even Harry and Tom Tabor joined in the search to avoid attracting undue attention.

As Tull saw our hero among the other searchers, his eyes twinkled shrewdly. Approaching the teacher and a number of others who were discussing the matter together, he permitted his feelings to get the better of him.

"Gentlemen, there's a thing that kind o' touches me in a tender spot. You all know, perhaps, that I had to be pretty strict with the widow Ambler about her rent awhile back. It was jest as much fer her interest as mine, ef she only seen it that way, but you can't al'ays expect that. Now, there's her boy,

who must nat'rally think as I've been harsh with 'em, out there doing his very best to save my property for me. I tell yo' gentlemen I sha'n't ferget it."

By this means Mr. Tull at once called attention to his own tenderness of heart, and, what was of more importance to him just then, to the fact that Harry Ambler was, by his actions, pretending to believe that the watch was really lost. Of course the missing watch was not found, and one by one the visitors and pupils abandoned the search and departed for their homes. Among the last to leave the grounds were the two Tulls.

"Wall," remarked the senior, when he and Ned were alone, "I've been mighty han'somely robbed, ef I do say it, that hadn't oughter. Now, fer recovering the stolen property, an' catchin' the outrageous thief."

A look of satisfaction spread over his face as he thought of his excellent chances for accomplishing both results.

"The thing took jest like the measles, an' I'll bet a big pumpkin that the old woman herself locks up her valables after this, when she goes out an' leaves that boy at home. You done it tip-top, dad."

The pair rode on in silence, but the father kept up some pretty active thinking.

Now, Mr. Tull was not a man who could shut his eyes to a virtue merely because it was his own, and he therefore realized that he had just completed a very artistic piece of work. He began very seriously to doubt whether after all it would not be best for him to see, in person, to those details which he had intended entrusting to Ned. He did not doubt Ned's willingness to undertake them, but then Ned was clumsy, and this was a case where a single mistake might make the whole well-laid plan miscarry. Since he had succeeded so perfectly in the important preliminaries, Mr. Tull concluded that he would personally attend to the whole matter. He therefore proceeded to announce the alterations in his arrangements.

"Ned, you had a kind o' hard time to git that Ambler boy to fight, hadn't you?"

"Why, y-e-s, sort o' hard," responded Ned cautiously, and wondering why the old man never seemed to forget a disagreeable subject.

"And, if I remember right, when you did git him to fightin', he walluped you pretty bad, didn't he?"

"Haint I told you a nough times that he didn't fight fair," replied the son, irritated by his father's persistence.

"Yes, I know you have, an' I b'lieve you, too, but what I'm after is this here. I'm kind o' feared that that there boy's jest a little too much fer you as the thing stands, and I guess I'd better handle him myself fer awhile. When I'm done with him I reckon you won't hav' no trouble about whippin' him—that is, ef he'll fight."

"I don' know as I see exactly what you're a-drivin' at," said the mystified son.

"Wall, to make it short, it's this. You'd better let me hav' that there han'kerchief that you found—in Ambler's coat pocket, you know. I'll see that everything gets into exactly the right place, and then I'll know the thing'll turn out jest as it ought ter, that's all."

"Say, you been't afeared that I'll peter out when it comes to the scratch, be you?"

"No, 'taint that, but the fact is you're young yet, an' I'm goin' to have this here thing jest exactly right. I want you to go along, o' course, and when the thief's discovered you'll be gittin' even all the same as ef you'd worked up the whole case ag'in him."

Ned was rather sullen for awhile and showed it in his manner.

For the purpose of arousing him his father renewed the conversation in a little different direction.

"Did you see what a hypocrite Ambler made o' himself to-day?"

"No, I didn't notice nothin' in partic'lar."

"Why, he went 'round lookin' fer the watch jes' to make pe'ple b'lieve he didn't know nothin' about it. They'll all see through him to-morrow. I reckon I p'inted him out to a dozen pe'ple myself."

As Ned reflected on the fate of his enemy his spirits improved, and he remarked with great wisdom :

"This here'll take the shine off o' somethin' sure."

CHAPTER XII

THE MIDNIGHT VISIT

WHILE Harry and Tom were engaged in the search they gave no sign, even to one another, that they doubted Mr. Tull's loss. It was not until they were well in the woods on their way home that Tom broke out :

"So you stole a watch, did you? From what I knew o' you I rather expected you'd get his purse and loose change!"

"Well, the fact is," explained Harry, with mock gravity, "beggars and pickpockets can't be choosers. Times are hard and we—I speak now for the whole profession—have to take what we can get."

"Just to think," resumed Tom, with earnestness, "what an infamous scheme this all is, when you see what the man actually intends to do."

"Yes, it's pretty rough, but I guess we can soften it a little. By the way, how about this jewelry? It takes me a little by surprise."

"It just suits me. Wait till I come over this evening, an' I'll fix it for you."

"All right, Tom. Now come as soon as possible, for I don't know exactly when my other company will arrive."

The friends now parted and sought their respective homes.

There was nothing peculiar about the appearance of the old mill that night. The moonlight, it is true, served to bring out its outlines and deepen its shadow, but there was absolutely nothing to suggest to an observer that the old building was inhabited. That is, nothing from the outside.

Yet any one who had chanced to get a peep at the inside of the mill at any time between ten o'clock and midnight would have wondered. Two obscure figures were continually moving about from place to place, as if seeking to escape through the blank wall. Closer observation would have made it clear that they were keeping a lookout for something on the outside of the mill. If one could have believed it to be a century earlier, the idea of the block-house and the midnight attack of Indians would have forced itself upon the mind.

Occasionally the sound of wheels passing along the valley road would give notice that some belated farmer was returning home from Mountville. Such sounds usually occasioned some remarks from the watchers in the mill, but at other times they were quiet. They even showed signs of exhaustion. One of them lay down upon a pile of empty grain sacks and, resting his head upon his clasped hands, fell to drowsing. The other remained on guard, passing from one point to another and listening for any unusual sound.

It must have been half-past eleven o'clock when Tom Tabor approached Harry as he lay upon his rough but comfortable bed.

"On deck here," was his greeting as he stooped and touched the other's shoulder.

"All right," responded Harry, alert in a moment.

"Come over here and listen."

Harry obeyed and the two boys were soon standing at that end of the mill which was nearest to the public road.

"I hear that sound, whatever it may be," replied Harry, after a moment of listening.

"Well, what is it?"

"It's certainly a vehicle of some kind on

the valley road, but it moves more slowly than wagons generally do about these parts. I should say that the driver has fallen asleep and that the horse had found it out."

"It's stopping, anyway," said his companion, with some little excitement. "I rather guess we're now about to see Edward Tull, Esq., in his great midnight performance."

It seemed, however, that Tom was oversanguine. Five minutes passed with no further sign of the expected visitor. The boys gazed steadily out upon the open space which separated the mill from the woods. This opening was probably fifty feet in width, and the light of the full moon rendered it almost as much exposed to view as at midday. Yet this space must be crossed by any one who would reach the mill. Its approach from any other direction was practically out of the question by reason of the miller's house on one side, and the creek on the other.

Suddenly a new sound greeted the boys. It was the noise made by rolling stones and pebbles that had been displaced by some one climbing up the pathway by the side of the Falls grade. The noise was a mere trifle, but Harry was confident that it announced the

arrival of his expected visitor. For some minutes all was again quiet.

At length Harry, without removing his eye from the point of observation, extended his arm and grasped Tom by the shoulder. The latter at once understood that a discovery had been made. Increasing his own vigilance, he soon caught sight of the object that had caused Harry's demonstration.

Just within the line of trees and almost concealed by their shadows, he made out a dark object of considerable size but of uncertain form. It was in motion, but instead of coming out upon the open ground it was moving cautiously along the line of the woods.

The exceeding brightness was evidently not an agreeable circumstance to the new arrival. Even at midnight it looked like a rather doubtful undertaking to attempt to advance unseen from the woods to the mill. Any person who should chance to look from the windows of the miller's house could not fail to notice the erect figure of a man engaged upon such a journey. It was probable that even from their beds some of the family, if they chanced to awaken, would notice the unseasonable traveler.

But the thing must be done, and the mysterious stranger within the shadows at length decided upon his line of action. The next moment the dark object emerged from the woods and advanced deliberately towards the mill. The boys gave a start of surprise. Up to this time they had been unable to make out the form of their visitor, but they had firmly expected to find that it was a human being of about their own size.

Now, however, to their amazement they beheld a great clumsy quadruped approaching the mill. His progress was painfully slow, and it soon became evident to the spectators that his present mode of locomotion was not in all respects comfortable. This was shown by the difficulty which he experienced in "getting down to his gait," as horsemen would say. First he advanced the front and rear foot upon the same side simultaneously, then he alternated one front and the opposite hind foot. Each of these movements soon seemed to become very tedious, and he ventured upon two or three lumbering jumps by way of a change. The grunt of discomfort which distinctly reached the boys made it evident that even galloping did not suit him.

In this fanciful manner the singular journey was at length completed. The next moment the animal arose upon his hind legs and extended his fore limbs to the edge of the mill platform. The boys now had no difficulty in recognizing the specimen.

The visitor at once set about the business on hand. He carefully examined the supports of the platform, feeling along beneath the floor, as if in search of some convenient nook or corner. He soon found what he sought.

He now produced a white package of moderate size, and reaching once more beneath the platform, he disposed of it to his great apparent satisfaction. After a pause for rest from his exertions, he proceeded to brush off the dust which had accumulated upon his person during the operation, and prepared to effect his retreat. He would have very gladly adopted the shorter method of making the return trip, but a glance at the staring windows of the house convinced him that he could not be too cautious. It was indeed fortunate that he had not entrusted the delicate matter to one of less wisdom.

His progress as a quadruped was neces-

sarily slow, and his occasional efforts at increasing his speed were exceedingly grotesque. The thing, however, was accomplished at last, and the boys again heard the sound of wheels upon the valley road. These sounds increased in speed as they became less distinct, until at length the midnight air brought back nothing to disturb the silence.

The two sentinels thus relieved from their long vigil, came from the mill. They had but little difficulty in finding the place of secret deposit so cautiously selected by their late visitor. Speedily making such changes in the arrangement of things as seemed to them wise, they sought their beds. Tom was to be Harry's guest for the rest of the night.

At the Tull residence Mr. Tull and his worthy son were separating for the night.

"My son, ef you want to see a grief-stricken an' surprised man, jest keep your weather eye on me to-morrow ef it should turn out that Ambler stole that watch. I never could hav' b'lieved it, never."

"Wall, dad," replied Ned, who was something of a wit himself, "I'll try to look at yer, but my own feelin's is rather tender, and it's

jest possible that I'll be weeping some myself ef that 'ere thing should unfortunately come out that way. Let's hope he's inner-cent."

The father and son parted with this kindly flow of good humor, which always does so much to render the family relation charming.

In view of Ned's closing benediction upon our hero, we must feel some regret that he himself was not to be permitted to enjoy the few remaining hours of the night in unbroken slumber.

The past experiences, and immediate expectations for the future, kept both father and son from at once falling asleep, and even when they had yielded to slumber their dreams may well have followed the interesting direction taken by their previous thoughts.

Ned had been dozing but a short time when he was awakened by a noise in his father's room. As the elder Tull was notoriously addicted to the habit of walking in his sleep, the disturbing sounds did not greatly alarm his son. As they continued, however, and Ned became wider awake, it seemed to him that there was something unusual in their character. Moved by curiosity, he slipped

from his bed, and, hastening to the paternal room, he stealthily opened the door.

By the moonlight which streamed in at the window, he could easily distinguish the different objects before him. As he had expected, his father's bed was empty. He glanced hastily around for the stalwart figure of his wandering parent. It was not in sight. A second, and more deliberate look, however, explained the situation.

There, in about the centre of the room, clad in the airy garments of the night, and just tinged by the pale moonlight, was the picturesque form of his sire. He was making the tour of the apartment—*upon all fours*.

In his dreams he was repeating the journey from the woods to the mill. As he ventured boldly into the moonlit space upon the carpet, Ned was astonished at the deliberation of his movements. He was regulating his step with the utmost care. Now he advanced briskly for a few seconds, and now again he would bring each limb into action separately, and with noticeable dignity of manner. Suddenly, and without warning, he changed his gait. Drawing his weight back upon his hindmost limbs, he launched himself with cheerful vigor

forward, and, as it happened, directly against his washstand.

As his very substantial head, driven by his portly body, struck the slight stand, the latter yielded to the shock and went down. The well-filled pitcher that was upon the stand, at once turned over towards the side from which the blow had come. In doing this it promptly and gracefully emptied its chilling contents upon the unconscious person of its assailant.

Instantly an indescribable howl awoke the echoes of the Tull mansion. This was followed by some remarks of a general but emphatic nature, but which have no direct bearing upon this narrative and are omitted from these pages.

Ned hastily closed the door and thus prevented us from any further view of Mr. Tull's action upon the occasion. Returning to his own room, the son drew the covers over his head and indulged in a most violent outburst of emotion. Such striking exhibitions of filial devotion were indeed rare in Ned's experience.

CHAPTER XIII

THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE

ON the morning after the closing of the school and the loss of Mr. Tull's watch, an unusually large crowd of men and boys had collected at Feland's store. Feland's store was the largest building at the Crossing, and it accommodated not only the village store but the post-office and public hall as well.

Any one who is acquainted with rural life will readily understand that the occurrences of the day before had caused considerable excitement among the neighboring farmers, and the matter was receiving full discussion by the Saturday-morning crowd that had gathered on the porch of the store. Just when there was the most lively guessing as to what action Mr. Tull would be likely to take, that gentleman himself joined the throng.

He requested those present to go with him into the public hall that was over the store, and from his manner it was pretty

clear that he had some very definite plan in his mind.

He mounted the platform and called the meeting to order.

"Gentlemen, I reckon you mostly know what I want to say. It aint nothing particular that it happened to be my watch what was taken, but we can't none o' us afford to have pickpockets an' thieves around the Crossing.

"Now, seein' as I was the fust victum, I've jes' took it on myself to make up a kind o' plan o' action, and see what you all think about it.

"In the fust place, we ought to organize some way so's we'll all be actin' together like, an' so's everybody'll have a say."

"I move we organize a Vigilance Committee," said John Feland, the owner of the store, "with Mr. Tull as the chairman."

The name and idea took at once, and the motion was adopted.

"Now, gentlemen," continued Tull, "this thing has give me a heap o' trouble all last night, and my head feels zif it hed been stove in on top—it does fer a fac'.

"Now, this here is what I suggest, and if it's any good it must be done right off.

“We don’t suspect no particular person, but it’s almost sure some boy must ha’ took that watch, an’ if that’s so, why the watch is jist now hid away in some boy’s hidin’-place.

“Now s’pose everybody here that happens to know of any sich hidin’-places will jest write them down on a piece of paper and hand ’em to Mr. Feland, why we’ll have another piece o’ information to go on with. Of course, nobody need sign their name, nor mention any particular boy.

“Then we can give the list to Job Firth an’ have him make the examination right off, before anything could be changed. It’s only a chance, I know that well enough, but sometimes jest sich plans works if they’re carried out prompt.”

Nobody having any other plan to suggest, and this one having the recommendation of novelty, it was at once adopted. Mr. Tull, remarking that he didn’t know much about boys himself, was not observed to do any writing nor to drop any slip in the hat that was passed around. Mr. Feland turned the slips all out on the table and he and the chairman made the necessary examination. When it was

completed, Mr. Tull once more arose and addressed the meeting.

“Thare’s another thing, gentlemen, that’s ’bout as important as ketchin’ the thief. That’s what shall we do with him after he’s got?”

“It’s better to settle it now afore anybody’s got any idee as to the guilty party, and I want to say a few words in favor o’ not bein’ too severe.

“Ef by any possibility it should turn out that the watch was took by any o’ the school-boys as had never been caught in anything o’ the kind before, why, I fer one, aint in favor o’ turning him over to be put in jail. I’d rather make a mistake on the side o’ mercy.

“It will be all right to do whatever is needed to protect our place here ag’in thieves, but don’t let’s be too hard on a boy—that is, if it turns out to be a boy that done it.”

“Let’s give him a week to leave the place, and see that he don’t come back ag’in,” suggested somebody in the room.

This suggestion being in exact agreement with the chairman’s views, he put the motion promptly and it was carried without dissent.

The constable was to report to the com-

mittee at ten o'clock on Monday morning, to which time the meeting adjourned.

The chairman was highly gratified at the shape things had taken.

He was perfectly confident that the single slip of paper which he had prepared beforehand and mixed with the others in counting, had gotten in unobserved by any one. It was simply impossible, therefore, to connect him with the examination of the old mill, even if he had been suspected.

The motion to drive the guilty party from the Crossing, instead of having him arrested, was exactly what he wanted. If Harry Ambler was compelled to go away under such circumstances, his mother and sister would surely follow.

He once more recognized the wisdom of having attended to the whole important affair himself.

"I reckon both me an' Bates will be feelin' easier by this time next week."

It was just past ten o'clock on Monday morning when a small boy in the road in front of the store made the announcement:

"Heer comes Job, an' he's got a feller wid him, too."

Sure enough the constable was in sight, and by his side sat a boy whose identity became the subject of general surmise at once. Before many minutes had passed the question was settled, as Job and Harry Ambler dismounted and proceeded towards the hall.

Our hero found the occasion a much more trying one than he had expected. There were between one and two hundred people at the store awaiting his arrival. Most of them had known him for years, and had been his friends. Under these circumstances he could not avoid the force of the knowledge that now he stood before the people of his own neighborhood surrounded by facts that pointed very directly to him as a thief.

Of the whole roomful there was but one—Tom Tabor—who knew the real circumstances of the case. It was not surprising that the audience observed that the boy's face was deathly pale as, followed by Job, he pushed his way through the crowd to the chair that had been reserved for him on the platform.

The seriousness of the situation, and Harry's bearing under the trying ordeal, lent all the dignity of a court of justice to the singular assemblage. Even Tull seemed im-

pressed by the scene, and his voice was not quite natural as he called upon Job Firth for his report.

“Well, Mr. Chairman, it aint very long, though I’ve been a good while arter it. It aint no account, I reckon, to tell all the places where I went an’ didn’t find nothing.

“Now one o’ the p’intz writ down fer me to look arter was under the platform o’ the mill up at the Falls—Conner’s mill. When I come to look into that locality, why, I found a watch done up in a white handkerchief. It was laid on one o’ the j’ists that runs under the platform.

“It was tied up mighty tight, and, as I could swear from the feel that it was a watch, I didn’t untie it at all. I thought that it might be more satisfactory all ’round ef it was brung in jest the way I found it.

“Then I happened to see this boy, Harry Ambler, who lives at Conner’s. I told him jest how it was, and he wanted to know ef it all meant that he was suspected o’ stealin’ the watch, an’ I had to say yes. Then he jist put on his cap, and came right along with me without any complaint whatsoever. Now, he’s here, and here’s the watch.”

With this, Job produced an ordinary white handkerchief containing a watch, as was clearly manifest from its form, as he held it up for a moment before laying it on the desk.

"Gentlemen, you've heered the report o' the constable, now what will you do next?"

"Take out the watch," exclaimed several voices at once.

"Well, Mr. Constable, s'pose you perceed to untie the knots of that handkerchief, and let's see whether the watch is the one that we're lookin' fer."

The task proved harder than was anticipated. It seemed to have been tied with the idea that it would remain fastened for some time. At length, however, Job succeeded in getting one corner of it free.

Mr. Tull, who was closely watching the operation, now noticed a mark upon the corner that was loose, and leaning forward asked Job to stop.

"Gentlemen, I observe that there's some kind of a mark or name on the han'kerchief that's wrapped around the watch, and as that may possibly shed some light on the unfortunate affair, I'll jest ask the constable to read it out."

Mr. Tull placed his hand behind his ear to hear the words.

"Wall, it won't take much time to do that. Them letters is 'H. A.' as plain as newspaper printin'."

There were sounds of suppressed excitement about the room, and some one, more nervous than the rest, spoke up from near the door :

"Is that your'n, Harry?"

Mr. Tull was on his feet in an instant. It was a favorable opportunity to show his own sense of fair play without at all injuring the object which he had in view. With the certainty of convicting Harry at the end, he could afford to be very impartial as to the means. He spoke, therefore, with considerable indignation :

"Gentlemen, I sha'n't allow any sich question as that, and I'm surprised at its being asked. No court would allow a man—much less an unexperienced boy—to be asked sich a damagin' question. Of course, you can draw any inference you like from the letters on the han'kerchief, that's fair enough, but you can't ask the boy to tell that he's guilty."

There was some applause at this show of protecting the boy, and Mr. Tull was encouraged to go further.

"The committee must remember that initial's aint names. Them letters might stand fer—"

The speaker paused, unable on the moment to recall any name which began with the desired initials. In his hesitation he happened to turn towards Harry, who assumed that the matter was thus referred to him.

"They might stand for Hillard Adams," he replied, thoughtfully.

Tull was somewhat taken aback. It had not been his purpose to actually make any practical suggestion, and, indeed, he had not contemplated the existence of any name that would divert suspicion from Harry.

"But," quietly resumed our hero, to the delight of the two Tulls and the dismay of his own friends, "they don't. They stand for Henry Ambler."

"Did you tie it up?" came from the same voice that Tull had already once suppressed.

"Yes; I tied it up, and I guess I'd better be allowed to untie it. The handkerchief is mine and the watch inside is mine, and I pro-

pose to take them both home with me when you've all had a good look at them."

Mr. Tull's emotions may easily be imagined as he heard these confident declarations. He was, however, allowed but little time for reflection.

The handkerchief was spread open on the table and everybody but the chairman started forward to get a view of the contents.

Tull had already arisen to get the first glimpse of his lost time-piece. He stood for a moment supporting himself by his hands upon the edge of the desk. The next moment he dropped with a most substantial sound into the uncushioned chair.

There, in fact, was a watch of the proper size and shape, and for a second the bewildered man wondered whether it could by any possibility be his own handsome time-piece. If so it must have devoted the night to dissipation, for it now bore most palpable marks of a hard life. Its brass case exhibited many a dent, while its broken hand pointed with seeming pride to the numerous cracks that decorated its ancient dial. We are unable to give its exact history, but when Tom had presented it to Harry on the previous evening

he said that his grandfather remembered when the old watch used to keep time—away back in the '40s.

The excitement now exceeded all bounds. Harry, spreading the handkerchief upon the desk, turned to Mr. Tull.

"Mr. Tull, I'm ready and willing to answer any questions which you may wish to ask. Would you like to know how I happened to place the old watch under the mill platform?"

This too frank offer revived the wilted chairman much as a sniff of hartshorne might have done. As he looked at the undaunted boy who stood before him he realized that a word from himself would bring out the story of his own villainy. He did not know how Harry could have gotten at it, but he felt very confident that his own design as to the theft of his watch was fully understood by the boy.

"No, no, you don't haf to explain anything. It's all a mistake, and I'm sorry of it—we're all very sorry of it. You all know how I've been telling you to be careful and not jump to conclusions, and now this proves it all. Gentleman, this meeting is over."

Harry found it very difficult to escape from the crowd without giving more explana-



“I’M READY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS”



tions of the circumstances than he thought advisable. He would have described the whole situation if Tull had asked for the information, but upon the whole he was not sorry to see the man avoid the exposure. He felt that by holding the knowledge of his wicked plan over him as a threat, Mr. Tull would hardly dare to undertake any further persecution of himself or family.

The delicate task of consoling the crest-fallen Tull fell to his son Ned, whose golden rule in such matters was "to do as he had been done by."

"Say, dad, it seems to me that you aint makin' a howling success o' this thing."

"What in thunder do you know about what I'm really tryin' to do. Things aint al'ays jest what they looks at fust sight. S'pose this here thing turns out to be exactly the way I really wanted it?" and he stared at his son defiantly.

"Well, if it is, why all I've got to say is that you take yer good luck mighty hard."

"I reckon I aint bound to be gigglin' and winkin' all the hull time like a school boy, am I? If you'd hev' knowd what you was about as well as I do, you'd never have let

that boy give you sich a lambastin' as he did."

This point wasn't quite so sore with Ned now as it had been at first and it did not silence him.

"Dad, it's mighty cheerin' to know that you're having the thing all your own way. It kind o' looked to me like this. The widow, she didn't want to stay any longer on the farm after Ambler died, and not wanting to pay any back rent neither, why what does she do? She jest works it so's you gits scared and flies around like a wet hen. You gets the constable, an' me, an' a nigger, to move her things out to the wagon for nothin' 'with neatness and dispatch,' as the advertisements say. Then, as you'd treated her so bad in the matter, why Conner, he takes 'em all in and keeps 'em fer nothing as long as they wants to stay. You lets the back rent go of course, an' aint got nobody else to rent the place to neither. That's your first move, and I must say that it was pretty gen'rous of you. But that aint the best you can do—not by no means. I didn't know you was particular fond o' that boy, but it seems you was. You goes at midnight and puffs an' scrambles up the

wust hill in the destrict, an' crawls on yer stomach fer about half an hour, and all fer what? Why, jest to make Ambler a present o' yer fine gold watch an' chain. That there's what I call lib'ral—I do fer sure."

The old man was so exasperated that he was unable to utter a word in defence.

CHAPTER XIV

A QUEER CUSTOMER

A PRIVATE conference took place that evening between the miller and the two boys. The latter explained to the miller their recent experiences as to the watch, and it is not necessary to here describe Mr. Conner's alternate surprise, indignation, and amusement as the narrative proceeded.

As to the disposition of the singular prize, it was decided to entrust it to Mr. Conner for safe keeping until such time as the boys should think wise to restore it to the owner.

"He knows that I have it, Mr. Conner, and if he ever asks for it I'm going to tell him that he can receive it at Feland's store on the next Saturday afternoon, and then I'll fix it so that there'll be a big crowd on hand and I'll explain to them exactly how it all happened."

"Weel," replied the miller, "it's like enow that I'll have the watch a long time if it only goes back on those terms."

"Oh, we may change the terms after awhile, but that arrangement will do for the present."

Perhaps the most difficult restraint that Tull had ever had to undergo was that which was necessary after this occurrence, whenever he happened to meet Harry alone on the road or elsewhere. He really prized the watch very much, and would have been perfectly willing to pay a good reward for its return, "and no questions asked." But right here was the rub. He understood very clearly from the boy's bearing that he might insist upon answering a lot of questions without waiting for them to be asked.

He also tormented himself with another fear. He of course knew that the family was in need of money, and he knew that the watch might be made to supply that need for some time to come. The boy seemed to have let the whole matter pass so thoroughly from his mind, as far as Tull could see, that the landlord became convinced that his valued time-piece must have been disposed of for cash. It was probably now in the window of some Philadelphia pawnbroker awaiting the lucky customer whose name would fit the initials.

Now that school was over, it at once became necessary for Harry to get to work that he might be earning something towards the support of the family. It was Mrs. Ambler's desire to pay her way as soon and as fully as possible, and in this her children sympathized with her.

For a month or so, Harry was able to get work with the farmers of the neighborhood, and thus earned small sums of money, which he took delight in handing to his mother at the end of each week. After work of this kind was through with, he adopted the somewhat novel occupation of selling paper lampshades.

Since the family had been at the miller's, Nellie had become interested in the work of making these beautiful ornaments. She seemed to have a special skill in combining the delicately tinted paper so as to produce the best effects. By the use of perforating needles she wrought quaint designs through the paper which only became visible when placed about the lighted lamp.

Several of the farmers who had business with Mr. Conner had noticed her work, and purchased shades from her at very profitable

prices. This had suggested to Harry the possibility of earning still more by traveling from farm to farm with the shades and offering them for sale. It never once occurred to him that there was anything undignified or disagreeable in doing whatever he could to aid his mother by any honest means.

For the most part he was pleasantly received, and was quite successful in making sales, but it is not our purpose to follow his footsteps upon his daily journeys as a traveling salesman. There was but one of these trips that concerns us now.

It will be remembered that Harry had attempted to learn all that he could as to the whereabouts of the runaway colored boy, Jock, but that he had never ventured to approach the old woman, Marm, upon the subject. He at length decided to pay her a visit, and as a ready excuse for the purpose, he got Nellie to make him a lamp-shade of brilliant green paper. Upon this she worked a child's face in profile. By particular attention to the outlines she made it reasonably clear that the features were those of a negro child, but of course without any attempt at reproducing the likeness of any particular person. Armed

with this and other works of art, Harry one day knocked at the door of the cabin in the woods. It was opened by the only occupant.

"Good morning, ma'am," said our hero politely, "would you like to buy a shade?"

"Wat's dem?" inquired Marm with suspicion.

"Why, shades," faltered the boy, a little bit taken aback at the sudden demand for an explanation, "shades are to shut off part of the light, you know. They make things look a little bit darker and a good deal prettier."

"Well, sah, does you see anything right 'round hyar dat needs to be made berry much darker dan it already am? I'm suah I doesn't. And den 'bout making things berry much prettier, sah, I'se out-libed all dat vanification long time ago. I don't 'spect to spend much mo' money on my good looks nohow."

Harry explained that his wares were intended to be useful as well as ornamental.

"Now, sah, ef you'd jes' brung 'long wid you some good yeller washin' soap, I kind o' guess I'd ha' buyed some."

Regretting that he had none of the article with him, Harry took the liberty of seating himself on the door-step, as he exhibited his

shades. He hoped that Marm's fancy might be attracted by some of the bright colors, and in this hope he was not disappointed. She soon began to show unmistakable signs of interest. The young merchant now explained that a lighted lamp was necessary to bring out the beauties of the shades, and his hostess cheerfully procured one.

He watched her with amusement as, one after the other, she tried them all. When she had reached the green shade in its turn, she stood in silent admiration of the child's face, which had not attracted her attention until the light brought it out. After her first surprise was passed she turned to her visitor.

"Who made dat 'are likeness?"

"My sister made them all. Don't you think it's pretty good?"

"Yes, sah, berry good, indeed. Wonder ef she ever saw my Jock?"

"That's the boy that run away, isn't it? The one that the newspapers spoke about?"

"Dat's the same boy, sah. Wonder ef your sister eber seed him?"

"Yes, I think she saw him sometimes over on the Mountville road."

"Den, sah, I'se mighty right suah dat she's

made dat picter fer dat boy. It's jest 'zactly like dat boy, when he war lookin' at yo' wid de side ob his face—jest 'zactly."

And the old woman moved around at different angles to the profile, with the apparent expectation of getting a different expression on the face from the different stand-points.

"Where is Jock by this time?" asked Harry, with assumed carelessness.

"He am now in de State ob Philadelphia."

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, 'cause he went off in dat d'rection in de fust place, and den in de nex' place 'cause ob dat 'are post offus card letter," and she pointed to a postal card, which was just visible through the wire screen of the closet door.

"What does he say about Philadelphia?" persisted Harry.

Marm opened the door and handed the card to her inquisitive visitor. It was without date, bore the Philadelphia post mark, and was written in a very fair business hand. Harry read it as follows:

"Marm, I didn't do it. Jock, (by Murray, Lieutenant, 5th Div. Phila.)"

It was directed to "Marm, on Rab's Run, below the Ford, and not more than three miles from Mountville, Pa."

Harry felt a strong desire to possess the postal as an aid to the search which he hoped to make for the runaway boy. He knew that it would not do to arouse her suspicions by making any direct effort to retain it, so he handed it back with no great show of interest.

The old colored woman was still dazzled by the green shade. She, however, knew exactly what she wanted, and was better prepared than our hero to set about obtaining it.

"I 'spect now, honey, you'se goin' to gib me dat one, jest to 'member yer good lookin' face by, aint yo', now?"

"Well, I wouldn't be getting rich very fast if I did business that way, would I?"

"Oh, now wat's a spry young gen'man like you is care fer gittin' rich. You neber had no trouble 'bout makin' plenty o' money nohow."

"But you forget that the paper costs money, and then the work of making the shade and the trouble of bringing it over here."

"Now, chil'," said the old woman in a confidential tone, "you jest look at it this hyar way. Dat paper didn't cos' much. I wouldn't 'fuse to gib you a piece ob paper ef it was mine, and you wanted it berry much, you

knows dat yerself. Den I know well nuff dat de sister ob sich a fine young gen'man as you would be suah to let de ol' woman hab de wo'k wat's put onto it. Dat am certain suah. Den 'bout the trouble ob comin' ober to de Run; why I guess de pleasure ob dis conversation pays up fer dat, don't it?"

"Yu'd make a pretty good jury lawyer, I'm sure of that anyway. But why do you want that one in particular?"

"Jest 'cause it hab dat 'are likeness on it. Dat boy made me orful mad sometimes, but mos' ob de time he war a mighty 'fectionate chil', an' I berry much like to hab somethin' around dat 'minds me 'bout him. Dat nose am wonderful like Jock," and at the mention of the name she thoughtfully picked up the postal card once more.

"Now, I wonder if you'd give me anything that I cared for. I'd like to have that postal card."

"Oh, dat am a berry dif'rent thing. Dat's some good to me, an' it aint no kind o' use to you. If it war any good to you, why den it would be more like de same case."

"Yes," said Harry, with great apparent disgust, "I thought you'd find some reason for not letting me have it."

"Ef you am in arnest, why I'll tell yer what. Ef you'll write all dem words off dat card onter a piece ob paper—yer can write, can't yer?" asked she, checking herself suddenly in laying down the terms of the proposed transaction.

"Yes, I can write."

"Well, chil', you jest write 'em orf fust and see ef dey am jest as easy ter read as de ole ones."

She brought paper and pen and Harry copied everything that was on the card. The result was more satisfactory than she had expected.

"Dat'll do fust rate. Now I'se ready to trade eben."

Harry accepted the offer and became the owner of the only word that had been received from Jock since his departure.

Before leaving the cabin Harry found it necessary to warn Marm against the extravagance of keeping the lamp lighted all day. They parted on excellent terms.

Not long after this Harry made an arrangement with Mr. Feland, the storekeeper, which finally brought about an important change in his own plans. Mr. Feland agreed to receive

all the lamp-shades at his store and sell them for a small commission and to pay the balance to Mrs. Ambler.

When this had been settled, Harry for the first time saw a chance to do what he had for a long time desired. We need not repeat the arguments by which he at length convinced his mother of the wisdom of his course, but will only say that it was finally arranged, with her assent, that Harry should try his fortune in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XV

SAVING THE MILL

WE must now pass over the period of a month, with only the briefest reference to the incidents.

Harry had gone to Philadelphia and began his battle for independence. He had experienced some heart-sickness as he realized that he was now in a world of busy strangers, who seemed to ask no favors and to grant none.

He had but barely earned enough for his daily support, and the success which he sought seemed as far away as ever.

He had made but one acquaintance, a boy named George Carrol, whose room was next to his own in the plain lodging-house that had become his home in the city. Carrol was a machinist employed in the Baldwin locomotive works, and he and Harry only met in the mornings and evenings.

At about the time of which we are now speaking, Harry had been particularly de-

pressed by the news from home. His mother wrote him that Mr. Conner was now idle most of the time, as Mr. Tull's new mill had almost entirely withdrawn the business upon which he had depended for his support.

The thought of the honest miller's distress came to Harry at almost every hour in the day, and he would have been glad to have had the power to ward off the disaster which now seemed so certain.

This wish came upon him most strongly one day as he stood watching one of the great grain elevators lifting its vast burden of grain and shooting it into a ship that was loading in the river.

If only Mr. Conner could afford such a plan for raising the grain to his mill! The idea seemed ridiculous as he realized the immense cost of the machinery, and yet Harry did not entirely dismiss the hope. Instead it came back to his mind again and again, until at last it set him seriously to work.

Little by little he altered and modified the plan of the great elevator, until he had a scheme which he believed might solve the problem of the Falls grade. He talked it over with Carrol and was encouraged to reduce

his plan to paper, and to persevere in putting it into practical form.

While this was passing he received a letter from Mr. Conner himself, announcing that he would soon have to come to Philadelphia upon most unpleasant business. It had become necessary for him to mortgage his home to raise the money needed for his family expenses during the coming winter, and he could borrow the money better in Philadelphia than nearer home.

Accordingly, upon his return to his room after a day of tramping, Harry was not greatly surprised to find Mr. Conner awaiting his arrival.

"Weel, lad, the worst has come, and so have I," was the miller's greeting.

"I'm glad to see you anyway, and I hope the worst won't turn out so bad after all. But before we talk of that I want you to go with me to supper and tell me all about the folks at home. There's a friend of mine that I want to make you acquainted with, too, if it's agreeable."

"Very weel, lad, it'll be pleasant enow for me, I'm sure, but I hope you'll take it kindly from me if I warn you against hasty friend-

ships in the big towns. You can na be too careful."

"I'm glad to have you advise me, but after you've met Carrol I don't believe you'll have any of that feeling about him."

The subject of their conversation came along in a few minutes, and was duly made acquainted with the miller. The party then went to supper, and Harry had an opportunity to learn of the little events that always get left out of letters, and yet are sufficiently interesting to be spoken of. Nothing was said as to the matter which had brought Mr. Conner to the city.

Harry was amused to notice the secret inspection that the miller seemed to be making of the young machinist. No word, act, or look of the latter seemed to escape him.

After their meal, and when the three had taken a short walk along Chestnut Street, they returned to Harry's room. Seeing that his guest was now ready for business, Harry brought out his own scheme.

"Now, Mr. Conner," he began, "Mr. Carrol and myself have thought and talked over your trouble a good deal, and we've worked

out a plan which we hope may help you if you think well enough of it to give it a trial."

"I'm very greatly obliged to you both for your kind intentions," he said, with just a little bit of suspicion in his tone, "but the fact is I've already decided where I'll go to borrow the money, so there's naught left but to have the papers made out and the money paid over. I'm thankful to you all the same."

"It's about the mill itself and not the money that we've been at work. Let me show you."

With this, Harry went to the old bureau that stood in the corner and took from one of its drawers a number of rough drawings. These he spread upon the floor. After placing the lamp beside him in a convenient position, he began his explanations.

The miller was pleasantly surprised as he recognized in the drawings rough draughts of the old mill at the Falls, with the steep road by which it was approached from the valley below. One of them was of the great wheel, as it stood always ready to do its appointed work.

Mr. Conner was pleased because all this showed a real interest in himself and his

troubles, even if the boy's plan should not turn out to be of much practical value. We all feel kindly towards those who show their earnest desire for our welfare.

His surprise was increased when he found that the draughts, rough as they were, had been constructed upon a fairly accurate scale, and showed the various distances, angles, and grades of the mill road.

Harry seated himself upon the floor that he might the more readily point out the different features of his plan. Carrol was seated on the bed, with his arm resting carelessly along the foot-board. He was paying careful attention to his friend's explanation, although it was of course no longer new to him. As Mr. Conner began to understand Harry's plan, his surprise turned to hope, and his hope to confidence.

He leaned forward in his chair, the more certainly to catch every word, while his gaze was steadily fixed on the papers before him. His elbows rested upon his knees, and his right hand was clasped over his left fist.

The light which fell upon the three earnest faces was softened by the delicate lampshade, but its full glare fell upon the

papers spread upon the floor. From time to time the boy would look into the man's face to make sure that he was being understood.

Altogether the group was an interesting one. A stranger might easily have imagined that he was looking in upon some secret conference over matters of vastly more importance than the crude inventions of a school-boy. Yet, the whole thing was simple enough, only—the miller had never thought of it.

Probably an hour had passed when Harry, having said all that he had to say, commenced to slowly gather up his draughts. He awaited the decision of Mr. Conner in silence.

“Why, lad, you’ve saved the old mill !”

He was evidently under a good deal of emotion, and Carrol, feeling that the situation was too serious to be comfortable, made a prompt effort to restore it to a business level.

“I believe you’re right, Mr. Conner. I’ve seen a good deal of such matters, and if that won’t work, I’m sure I don’t know the reason why. Now you’re going to want some material and some work to make the trial, and we’ve got just exactly what you’ll need at our shop. There’s a lot of old iron of exactly the right kind, and we’ve the workmen who can

make the most of it for you. I think I can get you a good bargain, and I'm so much interested in the plan that I'd be glad to boss the work myself if I can get off."

The old Scotchman's manner seemed to stiffen up a little as he heard these generous offers, and Harry noticed that he was eying the speaker with the same shrewd look that he had seen at the supper table.

"We're much obliged for your kind offer, Mister Carrol, and we'll be glad to talk it over to-morrow."

His response was civil enough, but it did not show much enthusiasm.

Carrol, believing that the old man was still confused by the new outlook that had been presented to him so suddenly, soon said "good night," and retired to his own room.

It was now Harry's turn to be surprised. When Carrol left the room, Mr. Conner arose and quietly opening the door, peered up and down the hall-way. Of course he saw nobody. Closing and locking the door, he carefully hung his hat on the knob and adjusted it so that eavesdropping would be very difficult if not entirely impossible. Harry looked on in surprise.

"We be weel enow acquainted, lad, so that I know ye'll take it all in good part."

"Why, of course, I'll be glad to hear you, Mr. Conner; what is it?"

"Weel, it's only this. We'll have to be pretty wide-awake if we deal with your friend Carrol. I've made that out clear enow."

"Why, what on earth makes you suspect Carrol? He's hardly said a word, and I believe he's perfectly honest in every direction."

"Oh, I'm na saying that he'd take anything that is not his own, but he's very deep, lad, I'm sure of that."

"Well, what particular thing did you see about Carrol to-night?"

"Didn't you mind the offer he made about the old iron and the work?"

"Certainly, and he had told me the same thing before."

"And ye did na see through it?" asked the other in a tone that irritated Harry a little.

"No, I don't see anything wrong about that. What possible selfish motive could he have in trying to get the iron for you at a low price?"

"I see how it looks to you, lad, but there's always a reason for every action. You'll learn

to bear that in mind as your hair gets gray. Now I'm just as sure as I am that I'm sitting here that Carrol really owns the shop himself, and he sees a good chance to sell a lot of his old iron for a profit. It's like that I'm more used to the tricks of trading than yerself, but you beat me all hollow on invention," added Mr. Conner, not to seem ungenerous in his greater experience.

The suggestion that Carrol, who was really but little more than an apprentice, was the secret owner of the great locomotive works almost raised Harry out of his chair with surprise and amusement.

"It's na wonder you're surprised, lad, for young folk are apt to take things very much as they look on the top, which aint always the surest way. Why, if you'd only noticed, the very moment you had explained your new idea, and when I was bound to be the most pleased and excited, the young fellow brings forward his offer of just what I needed to make everything all right. Why, if I had taken to it as I naturally felt inclined to do, he'd hav' made a bargain with me on the spot, and then, when I came to look into it to-morrow, it would be too late."

“ Well, at any rate you will go around and see what Carrol was talking about, won’t you ?”

“ Yes, after we’ve been to some of the other shops and got a good idea of the real value of things. I don’t know of any reason for not dealing with him as well as another, even if he does own the shop himself, if his prices should be fair. Only, Harry, always look out for people who offer to do you big favors.”

Harry assented to this valuable piece of wisdom and remained silent.

The fact was that Mr. Conner had made up his mind before leaving home that in one sense he was about to venture into an enemy’s country. He came, expecting to have certain business transactions to attend to, and he was fully determined that the shrewd inhabitants of the city should not find him an easy victim to their arts. He realized that the greatest danger would come from strangers whose only visible purpose was to do him some important favor, and he had armed himself very thoroughly against this particular class.

Now it is often the case that when we get to looking too intently for danger from one direction it approaches from the other side

and finds us unprepared. It might have easily been so with our honest friend, but, of course, he could not realize this fact.

It had been Carrol's fortune to get exactly in the line of Mr. Conner's aim. He had offered what seemed to be a very great favor without any reason that seemed sufficient to the miller. The latter recognized him at once as the very game for which he was on the lookout, and at once jumped to the singular conclusion which he had announced to Harry.

The next morning was spent in making such inquiries as Mr. Conner considered necessary, and in the afternoon the two went together to the locomotive works. It seems that he had expected to find Carrol with a leather apron on and at work in a shop with possibly a dozen other workmen.

His bewilderment may easily be imagined as he entered the works, which covered acres of ground. All of the shops that he had ever seen could have been brought together in one of these buildings. Hundreds of workmen were in sight, and he knew by the din that thousands must be employed in other parts of the works.

Immense bars of red-hot iron were being drawn from the furnaces and placed beneath tremendous steam-hammers, where they were wrought into the required dimensions. These giant hammers seemed as much under the control of the guiding workman as was his own arm. Mr. Conner was told that they could be so suddenly checked in their descent as to mar, without crushing, the shell of an egg upon the great anvil beneath.

The miller's face was an interesting study as he turned to Harry.

"I guess I was a little o'er quick about Carrol last night, and if you'd just as soon not mention my suspicions to him why I'd be glad to have the both of you take supper at my expense to-night."

Harry had a good laugh, but Carrol never knew exactly what it was that made the old Scotchman so exceedingly kind to him that night. He naturally supposed that it came from his own efforts to get him the material that was to be used at the mill.

The only reference which Mr. Conner made to the mistake was when he caught a smile on Harry's face after Carrol had gone.

"Weel, yo' mon grin if yo' will, but it's

better, after all's said, to be a bit o'er-cautious than to believe in every Dick yo' happen to meet. At any rate I'm sure to be safe."

And he really believed he was.

CHAPTER XVI

A GREAT BARGAIN

MR. CONNER remained several days in the city. He found that he would not need one-half as much money as he had expected to borrow when he came to Philadelphia, and, what was better, the money would now go towards the permanent improvement of the mill instead of being all expended for the family support. He had no difficulty in obtaining the small sum which he now required.

His suspicions as to George Carrol had been so effectually removed that he was now very glad to avail himself of that young man's generous efforts on his behalf. He not only found the material that he needed, but had a very great variety from which to make his choice. The cost was so low that he saw it would be a mere waste of time to look elsewhere. Two weeks would be necessary for the additional work that was to be done, and the shipment of the whole to the Falls for use.

With the great load of anxiety lifted from his mind, and a considerable sum of money in his pocket, the miller became as light-hearted as a school-boy during vacation. He and Harry enjoyed a day at the Centennial grounds, and of the two the man was rather the more boyish in his expressions of wonder and admiration.

On the last evening of his visit he took supper again with Harry and George Carrol. The boys soon observed that he was in unusually good spirits, and they each guessed that he must have had some new piece of good fortune. If so they were confident that they would hear of it in due time. And so it proved.

After supper, and when they were back at the lodging-house, it came out.

Taking a small package from his pocket, Mr. Conner laid it upon the table.

"Lads, do either of yo' mind there's really such a thing as 'luck'—something that pulls and tugs you right up to a piece of good or bad fortune, whether you will or na?"

"I guess what we call luck," said Carrol, "is after all our own good or bad management."

"Weel, now," replied the miller, "there be in Philadelphia to-night, I make no doubt, a million and a half o' people. Can you tell me why, out o' all that mony folk, I should be the one instead o' yourselves or ony other?"

This naturally worked the boy's curiosity up to the top notch, and they asked to be told all about it.

"Weel, it was just this way: as I'm off by the early train in the morning, I thought this afternoon that I'd be saving time by getting my ticket beforehand. Then, again, I thought that it would take just exactly the same time anyway and I'd let it gang till morning. So I gave it up.

"Now, what do you think, after I settled to let it be, and not get the ticket, the thing kept coming up in my mind, and pulling at me, till in the end I found myself walking right into the railroad office without hardly knowing it. Now, mind you, all that came after just turned on whether or no I went to buy my ticket.

"Onyway, there I was in the line o' people that was going up to the window.

"Now came another piece of luck. Just after I stood in the line, a fine-looking gentle-

man, in a big hurry, came rushing up, and he steps in the line right ahead of me. I was just going to touch him on the shoulder and tell him that he belonged further back, when I saw he was so excited that he didn't know he had taken the wrong place, and I just didn't just say a word.

"Now, you see, if that gentleman had stepped into his right place in the line, or if I had called his mind to the mistake, why then I'd never—but you'll see it all in a minute.

"The man must have looked up at the clock a dozen times before his turn came.

"'Two for Boston, and a section in the sleeping car, and how much is it?' said he, as he took out his pocket-book.

"'Twenty-one fifty,' says the man at the window.

"The gentleman opened his pocket-book, and then, boys, I never in all my born days saw such a look o' painful astonishment as came over that man's face. He'd forgotten to draw his money out o' bank.

"'My wife is in the waiting-room, our luggage is all here, and the train starts in fifteen minutes.'

“ ‘In twelve minutes,’ spoke up the ticket man, correcting him.

“ ‘I’m well acquainted with the president of this road, and I know he’d pass me quick enough if—’

“ ‘Well, I aint very well acquainted with him,’ interrupted the ticket-agent again, ‘but I know he’d bounce me too quick if I let you dead-head over this road.’

“ ‘I don’t wish a free ticket, sir. I want to buy regular tickets—first-class. Can’t you sell them to me and trust me until we come back? It won’t be a week at the longest.’

“ ‘Not this time,’ says the agent. It was just as clear as daylight to me that the ticket-agent didn’t care a cent whether the man got to Boston or not. He was bound to show his own importance, even if his road lost a customer by it.

“ ‘The gentleman was very much hurt by what was said, but fixed the way he was, he couldn’t very well let go.

“ ‘Stepping a little nigher to the window, so’s a body behind him needn’t see what he was doing, the gentleman actually slipped off his gold watch and chain and pushed them at the ticket man.

“ ‘Here, give me the tickets, and thirty dollars change—in fives, please—and let me redeem the watch next week.’

“ He spoke very low, so it was only by accident that I heard him. He reached out his hand for the tickets and change.

“ ‘This aint a pawnbroker’s shop,’ said the agent, loud enough for everybody in the line to hear him. He shoved back the watch as if it had been a copper cent. The other man was so nervous as he took it back that he couldn’t help holding the watch so that I saw it.

“ Lads, it was a beauty !

“ ‘What on earth shall I do?’ said the gentleman, kind o’ wild with despair.

“ ‘Walk,’ says the man at the window.

“ ‘Walk to Boston?’ said the gentleman in astonishment.

“ ‘I don’t care where, so that it’s far enough to let the next gentleman get to the window, and you’d better start right off, too.’

“ He seemed like he was getting mad, and the gentleman moved off, and it was my turn. I paid my money and got my ticket and was through in ten seconds.

“ Just as I came out of the door I next to

run into the Boston man. He was looking at his watch. You see, all this happened in less time than it takes me to tell it, so his train hadn't gone yet.

“‘Just four minutes more, and I *must go on that train.*’

“He happened to look up and see me. I suppose there mon have been something in my face that attracted him, for he came straight up to me—a perfect stranger—and commenced to tell me all about it as if it was all new to me. It seems he hadn't seen me at all during all the time he was at the window, though I don't see exactly how he happened to miss seeing me either.

“Weel, anyway, I saw he hadn't much time to waste, so I told him that I knew all about it.

“‘Oh, that's lucky,’ says he. ‘Now I've just *got* to go on that train, and I want twenty-five dollars for this watch and chain. I don't care to say what they cost. It really makes me sick to think of it, but it aint a question of value with me now. I must get money enough to go.’

“Now, Harry, I've wanted a watch for mony a year, but I always ken too much to

buy one of the cheap-made sort. 'They're na good, lads, and you'll both do weel to bide your time until you can afford good ones.'

As he spoke the miller, by way of illustration, laid his hand upon the package on the table.

"Now it's more than likely that if I'd ground him down, he'd hav' let me hav' it for the price of the tickets—twenty-one fifty—but I'm happier the way it is. I took the watch and chain and gave him three ten dollar bills, which was five dollars more than he asked.

"It would have done you good, lads, to have seen the tears that almost came into the man's eyes as he shook hands wi' me. You could tell that he was a true gentleman by the words he used.

"'My pain at sacrificing my time-piece,' said he, 'is entirely overcome by the pleasure of knowing that it is in the service of a real gentleman—one who would not take advantage of another's temporary necessities.'

"And he meant it, too. I could see by his face that whatever pain it caused him at first was all gone. He was contented with the bargain.

"The next minute he left me, and, would you believe it, he was in such a hurry that he forgot to go for his tickets after all. I reckon he paid on the train, and if the ticket-agent had to pay out of his own pocket for the two tickets he marked, why it served him right.

"You see, boys, it pays to be polite and lend a helping hand. I don't advise it just because it pays, but it does pay, for there's the watch."

He untied the package and laid the glittering watch and chain in the full light of the lamp.

The boys looked at the watch and then cast hasty glances at each other. Harry was troubled by a slight twitching at the corners of his mouth, while Carrol had a violent attack of coughing which compelled him to turn his back on Mr. Conner.

They each recalled an evening, not long before, when they had spent a few moments in a cheap John auction store on Eighth Street witnessing a sale of showy jewelry.

The present delight of Mr. Conner over his bargain was not greater than the pleasure of the auctioneer on that occasion when, after

having exercised his greatest powers of persuasion, he sold a watch and chain of the exact pattern and quality of Mr. Conner's for two dollars and fifty cents.

CHAPTER XVII

HARRY'S INVENTION

WE may here say, once for all, that Mr. Conner's new watch never figured very much in history. Harry never saw it again after Mr. Conner's return to the mill, nor did the miller find it necessary to refer to it in their conversations at any future time. From Nellie, Harry learned that for some weeks it was the pride of its owner, and seemed to possess all possible virtues—except that of keeping time.

For the purpose of securing for it even this accomplishment, the miller took the watch to the jeweler at Mountville. This visit must have resulted in shedding some new light upon the character and quality of the time-piece. Shortly afterwards it became the property of the colored man, Pete, in exchange for two days of service in assisting Mr. Conner at road-grading.

During the two weeks immediately follow-

ing his return from Philadelphia, Mr. Conner was cheerful, but mysterious. His business had been steadily falling off, and he knew it. Yet he was observed to smile, as he stood in the mill door and gazed down along the steep road-way which he had so often predicted would yet ruin his business.

Indeed, since his return from Philadelphia, he had devoted all of his spare time to this very object. Stones had been removed, and the road-bed smoothed by cutting down a hillock here and filling up a hollow there. Now it looked so straight and smooth that one would have imagined that it was intended for some out-door game rather than for a public highway.

His action had been the cause of much surprise and some amusement among the farmers who noticed his work. Many of them told him that he was worse than wasting time; that the road was smooth enough before, and that his present work made it still harder to climb.

He laughed pleasantly and told them each to bring a load of wheat on a day that he named, when he promised to show them how to get it up the grade without putting whip

to their horses. Then they began to suspect that he had something in view at which they could only guess, and their curiosity was aroused.

His offer was passed from one farmer to another until it became evident that he would have a pretty large gathering of people, if nothing else, upon that day. And the time was now only three days off.

The miller was casting an interested look up along the road toward Mountville. Presently he was rewarded by catching sight of two large wagons.

They came slowly along until they reached the Falls. Yes, that was the place.

Mr. Conner shook hands with Carrol much as if he had brought a rescuing party to a besieged town. A half-dozen workmen were with the wagons and they set to work at once.

The old mill had not witnessed such a scene of bustle and noise since its own wheel had first been set in motion. Hatchets and saws, and picks and shovels, and spikes and sledge-hammers were seen and heard on every hand.

All that day and the next the work went forward, and it was the morning of the third day when the wagons and laborers returned

to the station. Everything was ready and had been thoroughly tested. It worked like a charm.

When the first farmer drove up to the foot of the Falls grade a singular sight met his gaze. At the bottom of the grade stood an open car about the size of a wagon. It was upon a neat iron track that extended up the smooth road-bed to the very door of the mill.

To this car was attached a large rope or cable which also extended up the grade and was fastened to a great wooden roller at the top. The cable was resting loosely along the road between the rails.

When the farmer had transferred his wheat to the car, Mr. Conner, who was above, pushed a large lever by means of which a great belt was at once brought in contact with the roller. The belt was then set in motion by some power which was not visible to the farmers below.

Instantly the great roller commenced to turn and wind up the cable. The latter tightened at once, and the loaded car started up the grade as if it had been upon a level floor.

In as many seconds as it had formerly required minutes the load of wheat was stand-

ing at the mill door, and, as the miller had promised, the whip had not been used.

Other farmers kept arriving until there was grist enough in the mill to keep it running steadily for three weeks at least.

Of course that part of the railroad that was in sight was easily understood, but the people at the foot of the track were in entire ignorance as to the power that moved the great belt. No horse could have done it, and a steam engine would have been too expensive.

At last the farmers themselves entered the car and were whisked up the grade at a rate that took away their breath. Mr. Conner received them cordially at the door and they soon understood the secret of the belt and roller.

The other end of the belt was passed around an iron extension, in the shape of a cylinder, that had been built or fastened on to the axle of the great water-wheel. The motion of the wheel moved the belt and, through the roller and cable, communicated the motion to the car. The wheel itself performed this additional labor without seeming to at all lessen its speed. So the miller had the motive power, which is generally the great item of

continuing expense in such undertakings, already furnished and ready at hand.

The farmers were greatly delighted at the new and most convenient arrangement. They could now drive up to the car, as it stood at the foot of the grade, unload their grain, and drive off without the slightest concern over the steepness of the grade.

The mill was not only restored to its former favor, but the singular invention served as an advertisement, and made the place known to many new customers. The farmers brought their wives and children to enjoy the novelty of the railway ride, much as they might have done if Mr. Conner had established a set of flying horses.

He was careful to give the credit of the plan to the one who deserved it. Harry would have been pleased at the many words of praise which were bestowed upon him by the neighbors. It would have given him still greater pleasure to have heard the miller again acknowledge that the boy's plan had saved the mill from going down before the competition of its rival.

The letter containing the account of the opening day gave Harry and George Carrol

one of the pleasantest evenings that they had ever enjoyed.

There was, however, one person to whom the new fangled railroad brought surprise without pleasure. Jeremiah Tull predicted some wholesale disaster as the result of the rash experiment.

"That 'are's pretty enough, but 'taint safe. That rope's bound to break one o' these days, and that car 'll come coplunk down the track an' kill a team o' horses deader 'an a door nail. You jest remember what it is I'm tellin' you."

His hearers remembered what he told them, but as the dreadful result which he had predicted never come to pass, he added nothing to his reputation as a prophet.

The nearest approach to an accident was when upon going out one morning Mr. Conner found that somebody had greased the track with lard. He was not surprised when an hour or two later Ned Tull came driving by. He stopped to watch the car make its trip, and then turned away with a puzzled air.

"Why, I put grease enough on that there track to have stopped that car even if it was bein' pulled on a level road by a full

grown locomotive, and now there it goes up a steep grade just as if there was nothing the matter."

The elder Tull was just now so deep in politics that he was unable to give that attention to the milling business that he intended to do in the near future. His first thought was to pay no attention to the new move on the part of his rival, until his own hands were less occupied. Circumstances, as we shall see, soon compelled him to take a different course in this respect.

His empty watch pocket continued to be a source of unpleasant reflection. He wondered from time to time whether the lucky person, with the name to fit the initials, had yet made his purchase.

All of the reflections were, however, considerably sweetened by the fact that he had received the nomination of his party for the legislature. The battle was now between himself and Mr. Lovell, the candidate of the opposite party. Everything seemed to point to his election, and the utmost enthusiasm prevailed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MAGIC BAG

WE are sorry to say that while Harry had been able to do so much for Mr. Conner, he did not seem to be accomplishing very much for himself. He was certainly not very rapidly acquiring that independence for either himself or family, that had been his hope and object.

Up to about the time of Mr. Conner's visit to Philadelphia, our hero had been able to support himself and occasionally to send small sums of money home. At last, however, he found that he was not doing so well. He could hardly tell how it was, but he seemed to realize that he was not as good a salesman as he had been when he had first entered upon his new vocation.

He felt that while they were all so poor, it was the right thing for him to do, yet he most heartily wished for some steady occupation. He began to see how the rudeness

and contempt with which he, and others like him, were treated, would at length break down the self-respect of those who had to endure it.

For this reason he had almost unconsciously come to devote his greatest efforts towards securing employment, and was therefore less persistent in offering his wares for sale. The consequence was perfectly natural. He did secure one or two short employments, but he sold fewer shades and had less money at the end of the week.

Unfortunately the boy himself could not see exactly what caused his greater want of success, and so was unable to remedy it. He began to be discouraged. His feeling now was not the same which he had experienced at the end of his first day's work, but it was probably more injurious.

The more violent disappointment was sure to pass away, but the slow acknowledgment of weakness and defeat would leave him less able to meet the battles that must be fought in the future.

For the two weeks just before the day of which we are about to speak, Harry had not earned enough money, aside from the cost of his meals, to pay his room-rent. The kind-

ness of Carrol had, however, prevented his situation from becoming desperate.

His letters home had been as cheerful as he could truthfully make them under the circumstances, but they were not very enthusiastic. It must not be imagined from all this that Harry Ambler had any thought of folding his hands in despair and giving up hope. On the contrary, his efforts were greater now than ever before, only he could not help knowing that the results were not so good.

It was early in the afternoon of a bright, crisp October day. Our hero was walking along Chestnut Street, and entering such stores as from their appearance suggested the possibility of his either making a sale, or securing a place to work. A handsome jewelry establishment attracted his attention. Should he try it? Yes, he had nothing to lose, and might possibly gain.

He approached the door, which, somewhat to his surprise, was held wide open for him by the door boy. It would have been more in accordance with his past experience had that official seized the knob and braced himself to keep the door closed.

The next moment convinced Harry that the

door boy had merely been the victim of circumstances. He had in fact opened the door for an elderly gentleman who had just alighted from a carriage and was crossing the pavement at the moment our hero had decided to enter the store.

Harry had entered before he fully understood the situation. Knowing very well that he would receive but slight attention while a wealthy customer was kept waiting, he managed to delay his own application until the new-comer had been served.

Seating himself upon one of the cushioned stools, he rested and took a survey of the elegant store. His attention was very soon drawn to the new customer, who had approached the counter, upon which stood a case containing the precious stones. He was not more than ten feet from Harry.

His dress was plain but of fine quality. He was of medium height and about sixty years of age, with hair and whiskers well sprinkled with gray. He carried a brown cloth bag in his hand, such as Harry had seen carried by many Philadelphians for convenience in making purchases.

The whole of the conversation that ensued

was necessarily overheard by the boy, who was soon deeply interested in it. He had never before heard such large prices mentioned with such slight concern by either customer or merchant.

“Will you kindly show me some of your best Brazilian diamonds?”

“Diamonds, sir? Certainly,” and the salesman placed one of the trays before the customer who had now seated himself and laid aside the bag. When the diamonds were placed on the counter he drew off his right glove and, producing a magnifying glass from his vest pocket, he began to examine the stones.

There were not more than a dozen of them in all, and he picked each one of them up in turn, and after a moment's examination through the glass he returned them to the tray.

“Please show me some more. There is not one Brazilian stone in that whole lot.”

The salesman removed the first tray and replaced it by another, and the old gentleman continued his examination. He was apparently more successful now, as he occasionally laid aside one of the stones.

"Aren't all the diamonds that are in the market taken from the Brazilian mines?" asked the clerk, evidently impressed by the knowledge exhibited by the customer.

"Oh, no, no," said the other, looking up in good-natured surprise. "The Griqualand mines in South Africa are flooding the market with inferior stones, and it looks as if your firm had taken its full share of them. Here are some real Brazilians though that will do very nicely. They are for my daughter's wedding present."

The old gentleman pointed out the five stones which he had selected and returned his magnifying glass to his pocket.

The clerk carefully replaced the tray and proceeded to put the selected stones in a small box, such as was generally used for that purpose.

"Oh, by the way," exclaimed the gentleman suddenly, just as the other was putting the lid on the box in which he had already placed the diamonds. The clerk stopped his work.

"Well, I guess it's no matter after all," said the customer, rather hesitatingly. "If I had thought of it before you had gone to the

trouble of getting your box, I would have had you put the stones into this casket. It was made for them, but it's not worth while to change them now."

While he was speaking he drew from his bag a very handsome little jewel-box of unique design. Opening this he displayed its beautiful cushioned lining of black velvet. In this cushion were worked various places for arranging the stones, either together in a cluster or widely separated, so that each stone stood out alone.

The case was really a most handsome piece of workmanship, and even without its intended contents, would have made an elegant gift. The salesman stood admiring it, still holding the ordinary store box in his hand. One or two other clerks who were near at hand joined in the group as spectators.

"See here," said the purchaser, who was evidently proud of the beautiful toy. As he spoke he lifted the black velvet cushion from the casket and exhibited another just beneath it of similar arrangement, but of a dark-green color. There were no less than four of these movable cushions, and by placing the different colors on top as was desired very different effects could be produced.

"Why, that case must have cost something of itself," remarked one of the clerks.

"Yes, I've no doubt the bill when it comes in will show three pretty good-sized figures for the dollars. The box wasn't made by a carpenter."

As he spoke the gentleman extended his hand for the case, intending to return it to its place.

"Oh, we might just as well put the stones in it now that it's open," replied the clerk, suiting his action to the word.

"Just as you choose," replied the purchaser. "They *do* look well, don't they?" he added as the clerks took a final glance at the precious merchandise.

"Now, sir, the price?" and he raised his hand to his pocket.

"Two of them are fifteen hundred, and the other three are each twelve hundred dollars apiece—six thousand six hundred dollars," replied the clerk, as he penciled the figures upon a piece of paper on the counter.

The gentleman thrust his hand into his coat pocket, but immediately withdrew it with a look of great annoyance. He examined the pocket on the other side of his coat. The object of his search was not there.

"I believe I'm in my dotage," exclaimed he, with considerable irritation. "That's the second time within the last three months that I've performed that wonderful piece of stupidity. My pocket-book, with just exactly twenty-three five-hundred dollar notes, is now lying exposed upon the bureau of room number fifty-four at the Continental Hotel—unless," he added, hastily starting to his feet, "unless some dishonest person has already taken it."

Harry and the salesman were each wide-awake for what was to come next. A glance at the pale countenance of the clerk showed that neither the profound remarks upon the subject of diamonds, nor the interesting exhibition of the wonderful jewel case had made him forget his duty.

He disliked the possibility of offending a customer, but he was prepared to emphatically decline any request to permit the diamonds to leave the store before payment was made. The request, however, did not come.

As he arose the gentleman opened the bag, and, taking out the casket, placed it on the counter.

"Put those to one side for fifteen minutes.

I will be back in ten, if my hackman's team is what he represents it to be. Don't let everybody handle that box."

The clerk nodded, and, turning with a sigh of relief, he placed the treasure in a safe receptacle to await the purchaser's return.

"I'm just as weak as a cat," he exclaimed, to a brother clerk, as he dropped into a chair behind the counter.

"What about?"

"Why, that old gentleman commenced what seemed to me to be the regular old story of 'left my pocket-book at the hotel,' and while I was waiting for him to suggest that we 'just send a cash-boy along with him to bring back the money,' I believe I lost ten pounds in weight from anxiety. Now I'm going to rest."

But in this he was mistaken, for Harry was standing at the counter, and had already addressed him twice without attracting his attention.

Of course, the boy had been an interested spectator of it all. Here was a transaction, occupying, perhaps, twenty minutes from beginning to end, in which the price paid would have bought two farms, and the property pur-

chased could all have been concealed in a good-sized thimble.

No wonder the gaze of the country lad was riveted upon the handsome box as it was placed in the bag. Without consciously noting the fact his attention had even followed the well-defined form of the box as it was carefully thrust into its particular corner. He would have had no more doubt as to exactly where it was than as if there was nothing to conceal it from his sight.

Now when the gentleman had returned the box to the clerk, the boy had experienced two most contradictory sensations. There was the elegant casket in plain sight upon the counter, and yet there, almost as clear to his vision, was the casket in the corner of the well-filled bag.

It had not been disturbed.

For some seconds Harry remained undecided what he ought to do. He looked after the retreating form, as the old gentleman hastened through the door and entered his carriage. As his walk increased in speed, almost to a run, a slight, but a very peculiar, limp was visible.

Our hero's reflections were brief, and the

man had not yet passed the door, when Harry first tried to attract the attention of the salesman.

"Well, what is it?" asked the latter, impatiently.

"I believe that man has taken the diamonds with him."

"You believe what?"

"That your customer changed boxes and took the one with the diamonds with him."

"You're an idiot!" replied the clerk, briefly, but to the point.

"One of us certainly is," responded Harry, naturally resenting the language. "We'll soon see which one."

"What's the matter, Mr. Harkins?" asked a middle-aged gentleman who had just entered the store. His manner indicated authority on the premises.

"Why this boy insists that on old gentleman who just went out, took with him a set of diamonds which I happen to have locked up in the safe."

Mr. Shores, who proved to be one of the partners in the establishment, turned inquiringly to Harry. As rapidly as possible the latter gave the reasons for his suspicion.

"Let me see the box, Mr. Harkins."

The clerk handed it to him, at the same time casting a rather savage glance at Harry for his intermeddling.

Mr. Shores examined the box with care and finally gave it a shake, at the same time listening to the sound.

"I'm afraid of that. Mr. Harkins get me a chisel."

"Mr. Shores, that box is very valuable. The inside arrangement is the most elegant that I ever saw."

"Then I'll just take a look at it myself. Please get the chisel."

Without further delay the chisel was procured, and Mr. Shores himself assumed the responsibility of using it. The lock resisted strongly, but it was only a question of a little more force, when it gave way and exhibited the contents of the box.

It contained cotton principally, but deposited in this, were six good-sized glass beads.

CHAPTER XIX

BETTER DAYS

THE excitement following the discovery of the contents of the casket may be easily imagined. Mr. Harkins rushed frantically to the door and gazed wildly down the street. If he had any definite idea in his head, it was that the late customer might by this time have discovered his mistake and be returning to correct it. We need hardly say that he was disappointed in this hope.

Mr. Shores, however, seemed to be rather more self-possessed than before the discovery.

"Gentlemen, please return to your counters. Mr. Harkins, and you, young man," addressing Harry, "just step this way with me."

They followed him into his private office and accepted the chairs to which he motioned them. Seating himself at his desk, he proceeded at once to business.

"Mr. Harkins, please give me a description of the man who bought the diamonds."

The excited salesman gave such information as to height, weight, complexion, color of hair, and style of dress as he could recall. Mr. Shores made careful notes of the description and then dismissed the clerk to his counter. He then turned to our hero.

"Now, Mr. — by what name shall I call you?"

"My name is Henry Ambler, sir."

"Will you kindly give me your address?"

Harry complied with this request, Mr. Shores at the same time making notes of his information just as he had with Mr. Harkins.

"Now, Mr. Ambler, you heard what Mr. Harkins said. Can you add anything more or make any corrections to his description?"

"I am inclined to think that he is mistaken as to the man's weight and size. I feel certain that he had on an extra garment or two to give him an appearance of portliness."

"Very likely, indeed. Anything more?"

"Yes, there was one thing more. As the man was going out he walked much more rapidly than when he entered the store, in fact, he almost ran in his haste to get back to the hotel. I noticed that his left knee gave way beneath his weight while he was in such

haste. It was not what we would generally call a limp, but I don't know any better name for it. Ordinarily his step was perfectly firm."

"That was very singular," remarked Mr. Shores, as he noted it down.

"How about his language. Did it seem natural to you?"

"Oh, yes. He did not talk like a man of very great education, on the one hand, and he is certainly not a very ignorant one, on the other. He spoke rapidly enough to show that he was not repeating anything that he had just learned for the occasion."

Just then the conversation was interrupted by one of the store porters. He had been sent by Mr. Shores to the Continental Hotel to learn whether or not such a person as their late customer occupied room No. 54. He returned with the not very surprising information that the man's statement was false.

Mr. Shores now sent the porter to the police headquarters, with a brief statement of the facts, and the items of description which he had just obtained from Harkins and Harry. This being done he turned again to the latter.

"Now, Mr. Ambler, what is your business?"

This brought Harry with a round turn back to his own affairs.

"I'm selling fancy lamp-shades," he replied, bringing his wares into view. He did this with such an air of business that a smile overspread his companion's face.

"I don't believe we need any just now. We are not dazzled by the glare of diamonds as much now as we were a short time back."

As he made this remark, Mr. Shores smiled again. Having done all that he could towards the recovery of the stolen property he was not going to let the loss make him sour in the meantime.

"How would it suit you to stay with us for awhile?" he said, resuming the air of business. "You know more about the man than any one else, and we may need to consult you at a moment's notice. During the Centennial Exhibition, which will last nearly a month yet, we can find something for you to do, and in the end you will be at least as well off as you are now."

"What will you pay?" asked Harry, with a respectful directness that seemed to rather please Mr. Shores.

"Well, say ten dollars a week. But you will really have to work for it."

"That suits me, sir. I really want to work for it."

"Now, it is probable that you will have to spend some time with the detective officer who may be put on this case. I will not assign you any regular work in the store, but you may be called upon from time to time to do anything from carrying bundles to helping wait upon customers."

"This is queer," thought the boy, when he was alone. "For months I have tried to get work upon any terms, and could hardly get any one to listen to me. Now, by an accident, I have a good place almost forced upon me. There does seem to be a good deal more of luck than merit in this kind of thing."

Afterwards, however, he saw that his first view was not correct. His candid and intelligent manner had more to do with his *actual employment* by Mr. Shores than had the accident of his presence at the robbery.

My young readers can readily see that if the jeweler had found Harry a stupid boy, or had seen reason to doubt his honesty, he would have taken a very different course.

In the one case, he would have been satisfied to take his address, that he might find

him when wanted, and in the other, he would have handed him over to the police authorities to be held as a witness or to await further developments. His accidental presence would then have proven more of an injury than a gain.

If, therefore, we are tempted to be careless or discouraged because we think that "luck" instead of "merit" controls results, let us realize the mistake, and consequently renew our efforts. Chance does seem to have much to do with bringing us face to face with opportunities, but the opportunities themselves are only valuable if we have made ourselves ready to improve them.

Harry's home letter that night was by far the most cheerful since his arrival in Philadelphia, and by the end of the week he was able to send a small sum of money to his mother, as well as to repay Carrol's friendly loan. The sun seemed to be shining for awhile at any rate.

As Mr. Shores had suggested, Harry had to be a good deal of the time at the service of the detective officer who had been detailed to work up the robbery case. On several occasions he was sent to distant parts of the city

to obtain a view of this or that suspected individual, but all to no purpose.

In the meantime our hero found his position at the store a very pleasant one. He was kept busy during business hours, but he was by no means an indolent boy, and the hours of labor were not excessively long. Matters were a little strained at first between Mr. Harkins and himself, by reason of their little interchange of courtesies on the day of the robbery.

Harkins soon saw that there was no effort upon Harry's part to rejoice in the turn affairs had taken, and he had the grace to apologize for his own severe language. As we already know, the boy was much too sensible to bear spite for a hasty speech.

At the suggestion of George Carrol, the lamp-shade industry was not entirely abandoned. A boy who had worked with Carrol in the locomotive works had met with an injury that would prevent him from undertaking hard labor for some time to come. He was greatly in need of some means of earning a livelihood, and Harry turned the business over to him, reserving a small share of the profits to be sent to Nellie.

The temporary comfort which he now experienced gave Harry leisure to turn his thoughts once more towards Jock, the runaway. It must be admitted that time and reflection had cooled his enthusiasm upon this subject, yet he determined to do his best to find the boy. While he realized the great improbability of Jock's having kept so large a sum of money through the varying fortunes of all these months, he nevertheless felt a keen desire to know what had actually become of it.

He had but one piece of information from which to start with his investigations—the postal card obtained from the old colored woman. Who was “Lieutenant Murray of the 5th Division”?

Harry learned the location of every military post or organization in or near the city. His duties as messenger took him in the neighborhood of most of them, and he made careful and persistent inquiries for the object of his search. He could not even learn what or where the 5th Division was.

He went further, and devoted much of his time after working hours to visiting and talking with all the “Murrays” who were in any way connected with the military service. It

was all in vain, and he made up his mind that the signature was not the writer's real name, but the result of a mere fancy that had taken him on the moment.

His letters from home were generally cheerful, yet there was one item that rendered him a little uneasy. It appeared that Mr. Tull, after being baffled in his first efforts to break down the business of the Falls mill, had determined upon another and probably more serious move.

Mrs. Ambler's letter said that Tull was about to supply his new mill with the best of modern machinery. His purpose was, of course, to make a better quality of flour than was possible at the old mill, and so to withdraw Mr. Conner's customers. The old Scotchman was not able to purchase such machinery as would be necessary to meet this competition in the quality of flour, and was of course disturbed at the prospect.

One consolation, however, was the fact that this would not result in any such sudden loss of custom as followed the first opening of the new mill. It might take months, and perhaps years, to make the advantages of Mr. Tull's mill clear to the farmers, and—who can tell what a month may bring forth?

CHAPTER. XX

A CLEW AT LAST

AS we have already said, Harry felt that while he had steady employment was his best time for making an effort to find Jock. Yet he was at a loss as to what to do next. In addition to his visits to the various military headquarters, and his interviews with all the "Murrays," in or about the military service, he had paid particular attention to every colored boy of the suspicious age whom he had met on the street.

He had devoted much of his spare time to frequenting South Street and other parts of the city which were largely inhabited by the colored people. It was all in vain.

One evening he was in Carrol's room, and they were talking about this particular matter.

"Why don't you try blood-hounds?" asked Carrol, jokingly.

"Well, the trail is a little cold by this time, and besides that isn't as much in style as it used to be."

"Perhaps you're right, but I haven't any better suggestion to make just now. Oh, didn't you say that you had some of the boy's writing?"

"No, the boy himself couldn't write, but I have that postal card which somebody else wrote for him. Didn't I ever show you that?"

"No. Let's see it."

Harry went to his own room and returned with the postal card, which was now beginning to show the marks of age. He gave an account of his negotiations with Marm.

The boys re-read the brief message, but its repetition brought out no new meaning.

"Lieutenant Murray of the 5th Division is a fraud, and I'd like to have the chance to tell him so. Why, there aint any 5th Division in Philadelphia."

"I guess you're right. Probably somebody has written the postal for the boy, and not cared to sign his own name, so he has simply invented one for the occasion."

Neither boy seemed able to advance any suggestions of value upon the subject, so the conversation soon changed. It would seem, however, that the postal card was not to be so easily put to one side.

Early the next morning Harry was awakened by a violent knocking on his door, and upon inquiry he learned that it was Carrol.

"Landlady been drinking?" asked Harry, as he admitted his early visitor.

"No. Where's that ghostly postal card of yours? You haven't missed it, have you?"

"No, of course not. It's here on the bureau somewhere. Here it is."

"Well, I'm glad it's here," said Carrol, jocularly, "for it has really seemed to me that it was in my room all night. I was thinking about it when I went to sleep, and afterwards it seemed to float before my eyes by the hour. I saw the address so often that I feel sure that I'd know Marm by sight, and, as for Murray, why, I became convinced that Murray was a much abused man; I did for a fact."

"Well, I wish he'd make his appearance to resent the abuse. He's too meek for me."

"Oh, you may ridicule him, but all the same you have been cruelly misconstruing his actions. I got so awful tired of reading that 5th Div., Phila., that I thought I'd try to improve upon it, and I believe it can be done. See here."

Carrol now dropped his bantering tone and

proceeded to point out to Harry his discovery—if so small a matter may be called a discovery.

“You’ve often heard that it is necessary for us to mind our ‘p’s’ and ‘q’s’—well this is a case where you ought to mind your ‘s’s’ and ‘v’s.’ I thought that there wasn’t likely to be any such thing as a military ‘Division’ in Philadelphia in time of peace, and that set me to thinking. Now, reading that what it actually is, an ‘s’ makes this word ‘Dis.’ instead of ‘Div.’ The result is that Lieutenant Murray never pretended to be a military officer. He’s just a cop.”

“A what?” asked Harry.

“Why a cop—police officer.”

“Oh, why on earth didn’t he say so long ago?”

“He did. He’s never pretended to be anything else. He’s only a little careless about his small letters—that’s all.”

“Well, what does it all come to?”

“Just this. Lieutenant Murray was the officer who happened to be in charge of the station-house of the fifth police district on the day that this postal was written, and by some means, which the officer can doubtless explain,

Jock got him to act as his secretary for the occasion. The fifth district station-house is not more than three squares away from here. No doubt you can easily find Murray if he's alive."

The knowledge that the information, which might prove of such value to him, was possibly within an easy walk of his own room, suddenly raised Harry's hopes.

"Within three squares? Let's go right off," and he seized his cap and arose to his feet.

"Well," said Carrol, with more deliberation than he had before shown, "I don't believe that I'm much of a dandy, and aint generally very particular how my friends appear, but I don't really believe that you'd be over dressed if you were to put on your shirt."

Harry had discovered his omission before Carrol had finished the sentence, but it did not save him from the laugh. The news had excited him much more than he could have believed possible, and, as a result, the order in which he had proceeded with his toilet was decidedly irregular.

It took but a few minutes to make himself ready for the street. While the boys are on

their way to the station-house we may say a few words in explanation of Harry's long failure to make out the true meaning of the postal card.

It was simply because he had never lived in a large city where policemen have military titles, such as captain and lieutenant. When, therefore, he read the title upon the card, no other suggestion occurred to him than that the writer was an officer in the army.

As Carrol had said, the station-house was close at hand, and the boys soon entered its ample door-way. They had but little trouble in finding the very man for whom they were in search, and our hero could not help feeling provoked as he thought of the long tramps that he had taken for nothing, several of them leading him directly past the door of the station-house.

When Murray came in he had no difficulty in remembering the postal.

"Remember him? Why, jest as if it was yesterday. It was one morning about ten o'clock, and I was sitting here at the desk. Somehow, without looking up, I saw the little coon a-standing there a-hangin' on to the railing. I keeps as still as a post fer a minute,

then all of a sudden I swings around on the office-chair, and takes a clip at him with my club, lookin' as savage as I know'd how all the time.

"Yo' see, I jest s'posed he was one o' the shiners around here; and I knew that if he was, why, he'd jest duck his head and light out before my club was half-way to him. Then yo' know he'd come 'round here to the window and sass me to git even.

"But bless yo', he warn't nohow up to it. I'll be hanged if I don't b'lieve he took me fer a wax figger till I hit at him. He didn't move an inch, an' my club took him a pretty lively rap on the wool. He dropped off the railing like a squirrel lettin' go o' the bark o' a tree after he's shot. He didn't squeal at all, only jest gave a kind of tired groan, and fell in a heap right where you're standing.

"I tell you I was scared. If he'd a-yelled and called me names, why, I'd have know'd he'd soon be on deck again, but he didn't, he jest groaned. I takes the little codger into the back office and sends for the police surgeon.

"Well, it turned out after all that the club hadn't done much harm. He was jest ready

to drop from tire and hunger, anyway. I never in my born days saw sich lookin' feet. Why, that boy must have walked around the world. Now, that's the first I seen of him.

"Now, about this card. After I seen that he wasn't much hurt, why, I turned him over to Jane—she's the old woman that takes care of these offices—and asked her to look after him fer awhile. I told him how I was only a guyin' him when I clipped him over the head with the stick, and after awhile he kind o' took to me, and he used to come around pretty frequent.

"Well, one morning I was writing here, when he comes in and asks me to write a letter for him. I says 'yes,' and he comes inside the railing, as if the matter was to be kept between ourselves. Then when I'd took down a postal card, and dipped the pen in the ink, he told me what to write.

" 'Marm. I never done it.'

" 'Done what,' says I.

" 'Why, only jes' that 'ere,' says ne. 'She'll un'erstan', she will.' That was all I could git out o' him.

"When it came to Marm's address we were stuck again. It took half an hour to find out

that Marm lived on Rab's Run below the Ford, and not more than three miles from Mountville, Pa. I jest turned the postal card over to Uncle Sam in that shape.

"So the old girl got it all right, did she?" asked the officer, as he took another look at the dilapidated card.

"Yes, she got it all right, but where's the boy now?" asked Harry, showing rather more nervousness than he would have liked.

"Well, now you've got me," replied the officer. "He came around here for quite awhile, but he stopped coming months ago. You see, by one accident or another we're apt to have some such little chap around the station about all the time. They stay till something happens that don't suit their idees of what's square, and then they put out. We aint al'ays good natured round here. It depends largely on what we had fer breakfast."

"But we're very anxious to find him," said Harry, "and would be very glad of anything that would help us."

"Sorry, gents, but he aint been here fer months, and I don't never expect to see him here again—unless he comes in by the active persuasion o' some o' the force, and I hardly

think he'll do anything very bad. What do you want him fer anyway? Was it chickens?" asked the officer shrewdly.

"Oh, no," responded Harry. "Marm is anxious to see him and so am I. Do you remember what it was that made him stop coming here?"

"Why, yes, I do. He was here one morning, and blacked somebody's boots—we'd kind of helped him to git a box to go into business—and the man didn't have the change to pay fer the shine when it was done. Instead o' saying so right out, he sort of made it worse by pretending as how the little coon had wore a hole in his shoe by brushing too hard, and that he wouldn't pay fer the job on that account.

"Somehow the boy didn't think the joke was worth a nickel, and he got mad. After he'd jawed awhile, he shouldered his box and marched out the door with the style of a major general. I thought at the time that he was going to give us the shake, and he did. He hain't been here since."

"Isn't there any place where we would be likely to find him?"

"Speaking of chickens," said the officer

slowly, "gave me an idee. I don't know where the boy is now, but if you care to come around again in—say, about the middle o' November—why, I'll tell you when and where you can find him. It'll be a dead-sure point on him, if he's alive and in Philadelphia."

The boys tried in vain to get some immediate information from Murray. He seemed equally certain, however, that he didn't know anything at present, and that he would know something of value by the time mentioned.

"That beats the Dutch!" was Carrol's comment as they passed out of the door and down the steps from the station-house.

CHAPTER XXI

HARRY IS ARRESTED

THE next few weeks of our hero's experience as errand boy and clerk for the firm of Shores & Co. brought no incident which could be of interest to the reader. He still found the occupation much to his liking, and would have been very glad to keep the position. His duties had required him to travel a great deal to all parts of the city, and he had seen many things to interest and amuse him. Most of these sights were, however, of such a character that they would possess no especial interest for boys who have lived in or near any of the large cities.

But at last an incident occurred that we doubt not will prove of interest. It tried Harry's mettle in a new direction, and under circumstances that did not admit of much deliberation.

He had been sent with a small package to a

jewelry store located in Camden, which, as my readers know, is situated across the Delaware River, immediately opposite Philadelphia, and in the State of New Jersey.

He walked briskly down Market Street to take the ferry-boat, as he had had occasion to do several times before while in the employ of the firm. Of course there were many others going in the same direction, and with the same purpose of crossing the river. Most of these were persons who were to take the cars upon the New Jersey side of the river and depart for different points to the East.

Another current of travel was coming from the several ferry-boats as they landed their passengers at the foot of Market Street. Under these circumstances walking was rather slow and became slower as they neared the ferry. At last Harry descended the hill at the foot of Market Street and stood on the curb of Delaware Avenue—the last street to be crossed before entering the ferry-house.

A group of perhaps a dozen people had collected there for the moment, waiting for an opportunity to slip across the street between the wagons and drays that were constantly passing up and down the street. Occasionally as

they stood there a break would occur in the line of vehicles, and when it did a number of the foot passengers would improve the chance by slipping across.

Just ahead of Harry was a gentleman who had reached Delaware Avenue at about the same time with himself. Without having noticed him particularly, our hero was conscious of having had a view of this gentleman's back during the last two or three blocks of his walk along Market Street.

The traveler carried a canvas gripsack of moderate dimensions, and had the appearance of one about to leave the city. His attention was evidently all given to the matter of getting away. While they were standing there a ferry-boat put out from her slip and this gentleman's exclamation showed that he was provoked at having missed it.

The next moment he thought he saw a chance to cross, and preferring the risk of being run down to the annoyance of further delay, he made the attempt. His step proved to be a little too dignified for the occasion. When half way across a reckless hack driver cracked his whip and bore down upon the pedestrian with a sudden speed which left the latter no choice. He was obliged to run.

Not more than half a dozen hasty steps were necessary. As Harry saw him start to run away from the approaching danger he would have described the stranger as a business man of some importance—probably the head clerk in some wholesale house. In the fraction of a second later, as the involuntary fugitive set foot on the opposite curb the boy would unhesitatingly have pronounced him a *thief*.

Twice during his short race had his left leg given way beneath the stranger's rapid stride. Of course a mere defect in the step is so common that ordinarily it would attract no lasting notice, but in this case the motion was so peculiar that Harry could not believe that two people in the same city possessed it. The knee seemed to give way without any warning to the man himself, and yet he seemed able to recover himself instantly whenever it occurred. This gave a sudden and peculiar dipping motion, which, however, was not at all apparent while he was walking.

We need hardly say that Harry's heart beat violently at the sight. Keeping his eyes fixed upon the canvas gripsack and its owner, the boy slipped across Delaware Avenue

under the noses of the next span of horses. The object of his attention was just seating himself within the ferry-house to await the next boat.

Now while Harry did not believe that the man would be apt to recognize him as the peddler of lamp-shades, who had been present at the diamond transaction, he did not think it wise to make himself too conspicuous. His present business suit certainly disguised him enough, unless by being too much in his way, the man should be led to examine his features.

Harry was obliged to admit that but for the peculiarity of his step he would never have thought of selecting the self-possessed gentleman now reading his paper on the bench in the ferry-house, as the same self-possessed person who had given Mr. Harkins so much valuable information upon the subject of diamonds.

His form was much less portly, and he wore no whiskers, but these changes were easily accounted for when he realized that the man had deliberately entered the store for the unlawful purpose which he had so neatly accomplished. The expression about the eyes and mouth, as

he was able to observe them closely, fully confirmed Harry's first opinion as to the identity of the traveler.

His uncertainties vanished, but he was now confronted with one special certainty which gave him more trouble than all his momentary doubts. The ferry-boat would be in within seven minutes, and would leave on its return trip in three minutes more.

There was a warrant out for the man's arrest, but it was in the hands of a detective who was probably at the central station—six squares away. It would be simply impossible to notify the officer in time to stop the suspected man from crossing the ferry. Once in the State of New Jersey, and he would be safely beyond the power of the Pennsylvania officers.

Harry had but scant time for reflection, and he felt a strong foreboding that if the swindler got across the river he would not be easily found again. Whatever was to be done must be done at once.

An officer was pacing slowly up and down in front of the ferry-house and Harry appealed to him.

“Mr. Officer, I believe that the man who

robbed Shores & Co. of a set of diamonds a few months ago is now in the ferry-house, and I want you to arrest him."

"Who are you, anyway?" asked the policeman, with not very great show of interest in the information.

"I am in the employ of the firm—Shores & Co.—and I saw the man who took the diamonds. I am very sure that this is he."

The officer became sufficiently interested to walk around and take a look at the object of the boy's suspicions. The man's appearance did not seem to at all strengthen Harry's position with the officer.

"Well, if you want me to collar a gentleman like that, why, young fellow, you've just got to produce a warrant. I don't take no risks of that kind."

"You aint going to let a robber get out of the State just because the warrant don't happen to be right at hand when he's found, are you?"

"Not if I knew he was the man, but I'm inclined to think that you're barking up the wrong tree. You hain't been long in this business, I reckon?"

"No, sir, I haven't, but I know that that's

the man, and if you once get him to the station I'll bring the clerk that sold the diamonds, and he'll identify him beyond a doubt."

"So you say. Now, youngster, my honest opinion is that you've spotted a New Jersey minister who's been over to the city to attend a Conference, or something o' that kind. Why, he's the best-looking man in the room."

The incoming ferry-boat was blowing the whistle as a signal to stop her wheels as she came down into the slip. Seconds were becoming valuable. Harry suggested the reward that had been offered for the arrest of the criminal. No, the officer was thoroughly decided not to interfere.

"If I know that anybody commits any kind of a crime around here I'll do my hull duty, and I know what it is, too, without asking fer advice from you. Why the other day I caught a pickpocket in the room there, and I collared him quick enough.

"Why it was harder to get the man who was robbed to go to the station than it was the boy that went into his pocket; but I took them both; you can bet I will every time."

"You can't *make* a man appear against a

thief if he don't want to," said Harry, a little aggressively.

"Well, I rather reckon I can. Now don't do any more jawing, and don't be so fresh next time you come to town."

Harry turned away, and again entered the house. The passengers were coming off of the boat that had just made fast to the slip. Those who desired to cross to Camden had formed a line at the gate ready to pay their fares and pass on board the moment the gate was opened.

The thought of seeing the man for whom he had been looking so long, coolly proceed on his journey, and all because a timid officer would not assume the responsibility of stopping him, was too much for the boy. He determined to take part in the proceedings himself.

The quiet-looking traveler arose with the others and advanced towards the gate, and Harry slipped into the line immediately behind him. Before reaching the gate each passenger paid his fare at the window. Harry's companion carried a cane in one hand and the gripsack in the other, and with this load he found it exceedingly inconvenient to get at

his pocket. He therefore set the gripsack upon the floor by his side while he procured the necessary coin.

No sooner had the grip touched the floor than the boy seized it, and, slipping out of the line, started on a brisk walk for the street door. The next second the owner, having paid his fare, stooped over and clutched for the handle of his grip. It was gone, and he looked around in surprise.

Harry's manner had not at first been so hasty as to cause any chance observer to interfere with his actions. He had just extended his hand to push open the street door, when he heard the voice of the astonished owner.

"Hy, you there!"

The boy did not wait for further developments but started at once on a run down Delaware Avenue, dodging among the vehicles and behind piles of produce, and barrels of flour, until he was at least half a block from the ferry. Long before this he had heard the cry, which no circumstances could render pleasant, of "stop thief!" and he knew that he was being pursued.

Just then, too, he heard the whistle and bell

of the ferry-boat as she pulled out into the stream. He slackened his pace and walked along with as much deliberation of manner as was possible under the circumstances. In a few seconds the officer with whom he had been talking but a moment before laid his hand upon Harry's shoulder.

"Hold on here," said the panting policeman as he fastened his grip on the boy's collar. Then as he reached over and took possession of the traveling-bag he recognized Harry's face.

"Oh, ho, it's you, is it? No wonder you wanted me to snatch the other fellow. You'd just have walked off with his gripsack and bank notes while I was a managing him, wouldn't you? You'd have offered to carry the bag to the station-house, wouldn't you? and then skipped down the first alley we come to. I know your kind from toe to top-knot. Come along here, and I'll show you how we arrest thieves when we git the genuine article."

"What's the matter now?" asked Harry, in great apparent surprise.

"What's the matter? Why you stole my gripsack, that's what's the matter," said the indignant owner of that article, shaking his



“WHAT’S THE MATTER NOW?” ASKED HARRY, IN GREAT APPARENT SURPRISE.

cane threateningly as he caught up with the officer.

"Stole your grip?" repeated Harry, as he eyed the sack intently. "If that aint my own sack, why, mister, all I've got to say is that I had one very much like it."

"Oh, come on here," said the policeman, with an air of disgust as he started with the boy briskly up the street.

The owner of the stolen property hesitated in evident doubt as to what to do.

"Say, officer, can't you have this little wretch juggled without my going back? I ought to have been over the river half an hour ago. He won't have the cheek to deny the theft, and I really must go."

As he spoke the man extended his hand to take his baggage.

"No, *sir!*" exclaimed the officer with emphasis. "You don't ketch me turning in a prisoner without either the stolen property or the prosecuting witness. No, *sir!*"

They proceeded some little distance in silence when the man again spoke out.

"Say, just give him a kick and let him go. It's out of the question for me to spend an hour or so over this thing."

This suggestion was the first one which had caused any very serious concern to the prisoner. He was relieved to see that the policeman did not take to it kindly.

"Now, look here, I don't want any more of this nonsense. You're as much bound to go to the station as I am myself, and there aint the least bit o' use in growling. If we go right along you'll be through in ten minutes; but whether it's ten minutes or two hours, it's got to be done just the same. Why, if I let you go, this here little pickpocket would just as like as not swear that it was his valise and that you stole it yourself. I know 'em, I tell you."

The impatient traveler now saw that there was nothing to be done but to get through with the disagreeable business as soon as possible. They walked rapidly, and in five minutes more were before the magistrate.

Harry managed to get one of the court officers to send into the Police Department, which was but a few steps distant, for the detective who had the warrant for the arrest of the diamond robber.

The officer from the ferry at once went on to the witness stand and began to describe the

arrest. While he was doing this the detective entered the room and stood among the crowd by the door. He recognized Harry and quietly awaited developments.

The crisis came sooner than even Harry had expected. The witness, to show the depth of the young prisoner's depravity, testified to his persistent attempt to cause the arrest of the man whom he intended to rob.

"He had a whole made up story about this gentleman being the thief that robbed Shores & Co. of those diamonds, awhile back, and he tried his best to get me to arrest him. He said if he could only get the man here he could have it all proved up clear enough."

Hearing a slight movement among the audience, Harry looked around and saw the owner of the grip making for the door, with the manifest purpose of escaping. The boy gave the detective a sign, which was at once understood, and the next moment the traveler had ceased his travels. He was a prisoner.

A few words of explanation, and Harry was discharged from custody. The policeman returned to his beat, to boast of his capture of the great diamond thief.

The latter was in due time convicted, and

by his confession the stolen property finally reached the hands of its owners.

Shores & Co. made it their business to see that Harry received three hundred dollars of the reward which was paid. While the money had not at all influenced his action in the matter, our hero could not avoid the pleasure that came from knowing how useful it would be at home.

CHAPTER XXII

PRACTICAL POLITICS

HARRY'S service at the great jewelry establishment came to an end within a few days after the payment of the reward referred to in the last chapter. As, however, it was now wanting but a short time before the day fixed by Lieutenant Murray for imparting his mysterious information about Jock, our hero determined to await that time, without deciding upon his own future action. He was somewhat tired, and he felt that he could now afford a short rest.

Harry, while he was a steady and courageous boy, was after all only a boy. This being true, he shared the common love of boys for surprising other people whenever a surprise is possible. He now thought what a fine thing it would be if he could suddenly drop in on the folks at the Falls and witness his mother's astonishment when he handed over to her his little fortune, and set them all guessing as to how he acquired it.

He was greatly tempted to take the trip at once, but on second thought he concluded to postpone it until after his interview with Lieutenant Murray. He did not now expect much from his pursuit of the colored boy, even if he found him, but he was thoroughly determined to see the matter to the end.

With this plan in view he did not inform his mother of the capture of the thief, or the payment of the reward. At the Falls, therefore, they naturally supposed that when his work had ceased at Shores & Co.'s store, he had at once set to seeking other employment.

While Harry is resting from his somewhat active and exciting experiences of the last few weeks, we may venture to take a look at the state of affairs in the neighborhood of his old home.

The opening of the incline railroad up the Falls grade had restored Mr. Conner's business, and brought cheerfulness again to the little family. Mr. Tull realized that he had lost his advantage, but he was just then so much occupied with his political matters that he preferred to postpone any counter move upon his part until after the approaching

election. Circumstances, however, compelled him to alter his plan in this respect.

By his own offers of great things to the farmers in the milling line he had sought to increase his own popularity in the coming contest, and he had in this way made his mill project a part of his political capital. He had, in fact, spent a very considerable sum of money in the erection of the new mill, but in the end, and after all of his boasting, he had been publicly defeated in his purpose by the ingenuity of a mere boy, for Mr. Conner had let everybody know that the new road was due to Harry Ambler.

It was Tull's intention to meet this move with another on his own part, which he had good reason to believe would in the end effect his purpose, but for the reasons already suggested he would gladly have waited until he had greater leisure to attend to the thing himself.

His friends, however, including Joshua Bates, soon observed that the affair was attracting a good deal of attention and taking the wind out of their candidate's political sails. If it had never been made a matter of importance by himself, the voters would have

taken no notice either of its success or failure, but now they were saying that they could not expect much from a man in the legislature who could not hold his own in a business matter against a boy.

Clearly something had to be done, and that with promptness and decision.

As was natural, there had been great improvements in the methods of making flour since the erection of the old mill at the Falls, and both Tull and Conner were aware of the fact. In undertaking his new mill, however, Mr. Tull had reasonably enough relied upon his overwhelming advantage of position to secure him practically the whole business of the neighborhood, and had not cared to unnecessarily incur the expense of the most improved machinery.

Now, however, he saw that he must either do so or fail in his enterprise, for Mr. Conner would distance him if they were left to compete upon equal terms. It was therefore but a matter of time, and, as we have seen, it was found best for the sake of political effect to do it at once. The result was that he immediately set about procuring the machinery by which the best quality of flour in the market could be made.

He was confident that Mr. Conner could not obtain the money to make similar improvements in the old mill.

The election was yet two weeks off when the *Union Bugle*, the county newspaper which favored his election, contained the announcement that "Mr. Tull's new mill, as recently improved, is probably the finest flouring mill in Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburg."

Having taken this prompt step to secure at once his business and political success, the candidate had but little time to give to the operation of the mill itself. Every day, and almost every hour brought some new development in politics which required his attention. Some of these will be found worthy of our own.

One morning Tull was suddenly summoned to the office of his friend, the notary. The cause and result of the message were as follows.

The railroad company whose line passed through Mountville had for a long time intended to build a branch road from Mountville out into the interior, which should reach the farming and lumber regions about and beyond

Tull's Crossing. Almost as a matter of necessity it would have a station at the Crossing.

Now the company, desiring to procure the land necessary for its purposes along the line as cheaply as possible, had employed individuals to purchase it as if for themselves. The fact that it was ultimately intended for the company was kept a secret. In this way the needed land had been procured and the company was now ready to commence laying its track.

The shrewd notary had been one of these secret purchasers, and when his employment was ended he looked around to see how his knowledge of the situation could be made of service to himself or clients. As a result of his reflections he had sent for Tull, with whose interests his own were now very closely connected.

He briefly informed his client of the facts which we have just recited and told him that within three weeks at the longest, the track would actually be building between Mountville and the Crossing. This news merely stupefied his listener with astonishment, without suggesting any particular action upon his own part; but he was soon awakened.

“Now, Jerry,” said his counsel, “this thing won’t keep twenty-four hours. The company itself may let it out at any time, and then your bread will be all dough, as far as this point is concerned.

“Go right home and tell it around to a half-dozen of the right kind of fellows, that after a tremendous struggle with the Board of Directors of the company you have succeeded in getting the branch road built immediately, and that it is to run from Mountville to the Crossing instead of starting from Marsburg, twenty miles further up, and leaving the Crossing out in the cold, as was the company’s intention up to within three days.

“Tell how you heard of the thing just in time, and got an extra meeting of the Board at midnight and labored with them—well, to draw it mild, say until two o’clock in the morning—and at last proved to them that they would be flying in the face of Providence to follow out their original plan and not touch at the Crossing. I think you catch the idea; now work it for all it’s worth, and do it at once.”

This scheme of practical politics brought Tull up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

"Say, Josh, can't you jest write that out? I believe I could get that by heart and rattle it off pretty fine."

"No, that aint necessary, and besides there aint time. It's all lying anyway, and when it comes to that, I reckon, Jerry, you can get along without notes."

"Say," queried the candidate, cautiously, "this is all right, and as it stands, it's the biggest thing on the bills; but s'pose the Directors come out and say that they aint never seen me at all. That'd kind o' knock the stuffin' out o' it, wouldn't it?"

"Kind of, I reckon. I've already thought o' that, and it's all right. You just authorize me to offer them a half-acre of the Ambler place free for a station, and I'll see that they don't interfere with your election affairs. You could afford to give them the land anyway. It'll make the place worth ten times what Ambler—that is, what it sold for the last time. Anyway, Tull, you're a better man than Lovell—for the company—and I can easily manage their part of it."

"Well, I can tend to the other part of it—the spreading of the news among the intelligent voters. As to the station, why, of course,

I'd give one-half of the place to have the station there, and I'd make the biggest kind of a speculation on the rest of the land for house-lots."

"Well, start the ball a-rolling as soon as you can, and, Jerry, don't you forget that you're the strongest kind o' a temp'rance man during the whole fight. That thing's taking better than I thought it would. It's scooping in the church people from the country like a raffle at a church fair. Keep her up. There's lots of saloons at Harrisburg after you once get there."

These latter references were in regard to Mr. Tull's position upon the important question of temperance. The people of his county were strongly impressed with the evil results of the liquor traffic, and he had therefore found it advisable to take ground against the saloons, somewhat to his own inconvenience. He was glad to hear that there was likely to be some return for his self-denial.

He hastened back to the Crossing and soon showed that he fully deserved Bates's confidence. That night he imparted the circumstances of his great victory to a political friend, with the request that it be kept a secret.

He then retired to bed in the fullest assurance that by noon of the next day everybody would have the news. He was not mistaken. The coming of a railroad to a little village is an important event under any circumstances, and it had been the one great hope of the Crossing for several years.

At first the news was not believed, but when the next day the principal fact was confirmed by the company, people saw no reason to doubt the details so confidently recited by Mr. Tull's friends. He was on the crest of the wave, even with those who personally disliked the man.

The candidate himself managed to make it appear that he was reluctant to have the matter become public. When spoken to about it on the day after his interview with Bates, he inquired for the questioner's informant, and was, of course, given the name of the person to whom he had himself imparted the news.

"Well, now you just take my advice, an' don't never trust that man with a secret—he aint reliable."

Since, however, the thing had gotten out, even against his own desire, he consented to discourse upon it. To the crowd on Feland's

porch he admitted that he had been scared when he first heard of the decision of the Directors to branch off at Marsburg. The difficulty with which he had induced the president to call the Board together again to listen to his arguments; the stubborn opposition of certain of the Directors; the facts and figures which he presented on behalf of his constituents; the intimations that if the people of his county were trifled with too long an opposition road would be organized, and the vote at last, when by a majority of one the Board had revoked its former action and decided to serve the best interests of the company as well as those of the Crossing, all these and many more facts of an interesting character were drawn from the reluctant statesman within the space of half an hour after the crowd at Feland's had reached a respectable size.

The *Bugle* took up the matter and fairly outdid its former efforts in praising the modest energy of "our next representative in the legislative halls."

Mr. Lovell, the opposing candidate, recognized the seriousness of the situation. He strongly suspected that the story was a fabri-

cation, but Bates had already closed the mouths of the Directors, and no information of value was to be obtained from that quarter.

The editor of the *Freeman's Record*, which journal advocated Mr. Lovell's election, realized that nothing short of a counter sensation of at least equal magnitude, would save that gentleman from an overwhelming defeat. He at once set to work to discover something that would fill the bill, and he found just what he wanted. It came from a most unexpected source.

CHAPTER XXIII

MARM TAKES A HAND

THE political contest to which we have referred was so warm and the newspapers were so full of attacks and defenses of the respective candidates that everybody in the county became thoroughly familiar with their names, virtues, and faults. Each of them—Mr. Tull and Mr. Lovell—daily received the most extravagant praise and unqualified abuse from the two partisan papers—the *Union Bugle* and the *Freeman's Record*.

Among the other citizens who had been enlightened by the papers and the flaming posters which adorned the cross-roads was the old colored woman Marm.

She had special reasons for recognizing the name of "Tull," as it stared at her on her various travels about the neighborhood. She had learned that he was the man who had visited her cabin with two other men on the day of Jock's departure. His savage threats

upon that occasion had both alarmed and angered the old woman.

Now it happened that in rummaging about the attic some months after Jock's disappearance, Marm had come upon the boy's singular prize—the water-soaked fragments of a torn deed. She at once scented a mystery, and a secret was dear to her for its own sake, without much regard to its size or character.

She spread the now dry pieces of paper upon the floor and surveyed them with ever-increasing respect. From the conspicuous letters and ample seals she was at once convinced that she possessed a document of vast importance.

Not being able at the time to undertake to get at the true meaning of the unfamiliar words before her, she concluded to hide her prize until a more convenient season. With commendable caution she examined the only closet in the room, peered down the narrow staircase, and looked out of the window to make sure that she was not being watched. After "shooing" away an impertinent black bird that had perched upon a limb unnecessarily near to the window, she lifted the mattress and replaced the precious paper in its former hiding-place.

Upon at least a dozen occasions that day she was obliged to visit the attic, and upon each occasion she took a sly peep at the deed.

Now to properly understand Marm's thoughts and conclusions as to this document, we must remember who she was. The important events of this world, as far as they had come under her observation, were connected with the great war which had given her her freedom. She had lived in the South during the entire struggle, and the names and deeds of the heroes of that struggle were so impressed upon her memory that only death would disturb them.

For a short time she had served near the headquarters of the federal army, and it had been her fortune at that time to catch occasional glimpses of the formal official documents bearing the seal of the War Department, which were so often in the hands of the officers. When, therefore, she gazed on the great letters and the broad gilt seal of the notary, Bates, she had no doubt as to the general character of the paper before her.

"It am one ob dem ol' war papers, fer suah," she said.

She was so confident upon this point that it

would have required pretty strong evidence to convince her of her mistake. Instead, however, of finding such evidence, her further investigations only confirmed her in her first opinion.

When at length she found the opportunity to pursue her study of the mysterious paper, she used every precaution to avoid discovery. After fastening the doors and obscuring the windows, she would spread the pieces of paper upon the table, beneath the full light of the lamp, and secure them in their respective positions with pins. She was then ready for the task.

It is to be remembered that Marm was not recklessly hasty in her reading, under any circumstances; and in the present instance she had every reason for deliberation.

Leaning forward with the weight of her, not exactly fairy-like, form resting upon the table, she would adjust her chin to her open left hand supported upon its elbow, while with the index finger of the right hand she would follow word after word along the lines of the paper.

The light that reached her face, did so through the bright green shade that enveloped

the flame and produced a tint, which would certainly have puzzled, and possibly have alarmed, an artist. While actually engaged in the work of translation, Marm's mouth remained open sufficiently wide to allow her tongue to extend. When this member disappeared from sight it indicated either that its owner had some comment to make, or that she had abandoned her attack upon some particularly obscure word.

She did not long insist upon taking the sentences in their regular order. After laboring for awhile upon some unresponsive spot, she would skip along in search of more fruitful soil.

The reader is already aware that the document which was undergoing this severe scrutiny, was the deed by which Jeremiah Tull had sold and conveyed to Parker Ambler the little farm near the Crossing. Its language was of course the legal phraseology always found in such documents. Even if the old colored woman could have pronounced every word that it contained, she would not have gathered the correct meaning of more than one in twenty.

Yet there was the continual repetition of the one name—"Jeremiah Tull." She very soon

learned to recognize it on sight, and without the delay of spelling it out. She concluded that whatever the exact character of the paper might be, it in some way related to the war record of Jeremiah Tull—the man whose character was just now being discussed by everybody whom she met. Her interest very naturally increased with the knowledge that she perhaps held in her hands the secrets of so important a personage.

“Jeremier Tull, Jeremier Tull. Now what hab Jeremier been doin’? Dat am de question.”

She slowly moved her finger from word to word. Suddenly she came to one that riveted her attention. It was the word “GRANT” which for special emphasis is frequently printed in capital letters. There it was, standing out boldly in the midst of the common words, and Marm pounced upon it with her forefinger as if it had been a moth.

“I know’d it, I know’d it,” she exclaimed with pride at the confirmation of her predictions. “It’s all ’bout dat ’are Jeremier Tull an’ Gen’ral Grant. I jes’ bet that feller Tull war a rebel, an’ Gen’ral Grant cotched him at it, dat’s jes’ zactly what I ’spects,” and with

constantly increasing curiosity she bent to her task.

Wherever she found a word whose meaning seemed to bear out her theory, as to Mr. Tull's capture by the distinguished chieftain, her face shone with renewed pleasure. She generally greeted such a discovery with some passing comment, holding her finger firmly on the particular word, as if to keep it in place while she discussed it.

"Warrant." "Le' me see, why, dat's what dey al'ays has to 'rest people with. Dat's what dat Tull said dey was goin' to git out after my Jock. Guess he hab mighty good reason fer to know what a warrant am, him own self."

And so when she found the words "surrender" and "release." "I s'pose arter while he foun' it warn't no kind o' use standin' out ag'in Gen'ral Grant, an' he jes' comes up an' s'rendered hisself, an' then arter while I 'spect Gen'ral Grant tol' his sogers jes' ter let him go, he warn't no good, nohow. Guess dat 'are war de way ob it."

At length there were signs of some still more significant discovery. Her tongue, although silent, was unusually active. She

had found a number of words in connection, which, when read together, seemed to her to settle the question beyond possible doubt. The task of reading them so as to get their united meaning was a slow one, and for greater certainty she repeated it several times. At length she read them aloud:

“‘*The said Jeremiah Tull being this day lawfully seized.*’

“I tol’ you so. Gen’ral Grant suah to cotch him. Why, dat Tull warn’t nowhare to Gen’ral Grant—nowhare at all.”

From this point the old woman’s curiosity commenced to decline. After getting at the important facts, which indeed she had suspected from the first, there was not much pleasure in following out the almost hopeless task of learning the small details.

For such of our readers as may not be familiar with the language of legal documents, we will explain that the various expressions, which meant so much to the old colored woman, were merely the phrases to be found in almost every deed of real estate. To be “lawfully seized” meant simply that the person was the owner of the land and had possession of it. Therefore the sentence which

Marm had discovered was only the legal way of saying that on the day that the deed was made Jeremiah Tull was the lawful owner of the land that he was about to sell to Mr. Ambler.

Marm carefully refolded the paper and determined that in the morning she would hide it in a safer place than the cabin. She further decided to go into politics herself.

She carried out both purposes without delay. The precious document was deposited in a particularly secret place in the woods which Marm had every reason to regard as entirely safe.

That afternoon she met some of the Bramble Town people, and in ten minutes she gave them to understand that if the voters at large knew half as much about "dat Massa Tull" as she did, his chances of election would be exceedingly slight.

So it came about that when the industrious representative of the *Freeman's Record* reached the colored settlement, in his search for information as to Mr. Tull's history, he was confidently referred to Marm.

He found her cheerfully communicative.

She did not ask that her name should, for family or any other reasons, be kept from the public. It was, however, so long since she had been called by her real name that it would have been difficult to devise a better method of concealing her identity than by using it now.

She gave the delighted newspaper man the facts of Mr. Tull's history, as she understood them, but she steadfastly declined to exhibit the documents by which, as she said, she could prove every word of her statement.

The next issue of the *Record* contained an article which fairly convulsed the political community.

"Fortunate Escape from Disgrace." "Jeremiah Tull, a Red-handed Rebel during the Civil War. A Conspicuous Patriot in Time of Peace."

These were some of the head-lines that greeted the heretofore confident candidate at his breakfast table.

The article itself contained a great deal to show that the journal in which it appeared, had spared neither time, labor, nor money to get at the exact truth; that as the result of patient investigation it was able to assure its

readers of the absolute accuracy of its information.

“We have ascertained beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt that Jeremiah Tull, at present a candidate for the suffrages of the loyal people of this county, was during the hour of the nation’s greatest need in arms against the government. Nay, more, that he was at one time captured by the troops under the command of General Grant, and for a considerable time held a prisoner of war.

“To meet the possible insinuation that these charges are manufactured for political purposes, we will give our authority, without waiting to be interrogated. The facts come to our reporter directly from Mrs. Susannah Cobb, an estimable and intelligent woman who resided in the South during the whole of the war, and who may, therefore, be reasonably presumed to know whereof she speaks with such confidence. Mrs. Cobb has lived in this county for more than ten years, and is highly spoken of by all who know her.

“She says that she still retains in her possession the documentary proof of the facts which we have given. We give her name thus early, in order to allow Mr. Tull and his

friends the most ample opportunity to disprove her charges, or to show any facts as to the lady's reputation for veracity that might lead an unbiased person to doubt her word.

"Of the charges themselves, but little need be said. Those who have enjoyed the pleasure of listening to Mr. Tull's repeated professions of loyalty—both as to the past and future—will at once see the necessity of the prompt refutation of the charge of treason. Unless this can be had, the further candidacy of that gentleman, in a loyal community such as this, will simply be ridiculous."

As Mr. Tull read this astonishing array of charges, he recognized the fact that he was in a quandary. He had not moved to Pennsylvania until after the close of the war, so that he had only his own word to offer as to his conduct during that crisis. Whenever he reached a point where his success depended upon his reputation for veracity among his neighbors, Tull wisely considered the condition a critical one.

No wonder he was stunned by the news.

Ned, sitting opposite at the table, was no less amazed the next moment, to see his father

deliberately empty the contents of the vinegar cruet into his coffee, as he impressively asked himself the question :

“ Who in blazes is Mrs. Susannah Cobb ? ”

CHAPTER XXIV

A JUST REWARD

MR. TULL'S question could be very easily answered by any one possessing the information given in our former chapters, but Mr. Tull, himself, soon learned that it would be simply impossible for him to discover his assailant before the day of election, which was now so near at hand.

The editor of the *Freeman's Record* continued to refer to Mrs. Cobb in his paper in such a bold and familiar way that each reader believed that every one but himself must know all about her. When, however, Mr. Tull sent to the editor to learn Mrs. Cobb's address, word was returned to him that Mrs. Cobb was so well known that his pretence of not being able to find her was simply absurd.

Yet something must be done to meet the effect of Mrs. Cobb's charges, and it must be something that would reach the ears and eyes of the farmers before the day of election.

A last grand public meeting had already

been arranged for, at Mountville, on the Saturday evening preceding the Tuesday upon which the election was to occur. It was decided to induce a prominent orator from Philadelphia, who had rendered distinguished services to the cause of the Union during the war, and who was very popular among the people of Mr. Tull's neighborhood, to address the meeting in Mr. Tull's vindication.

After some rapid negotiations, it was settled that Colonel Putnam Strong should at his own desire come to Mountville to raise his voice on behalf of the slandered patriot—the patriot paying the expenses of the journey.

Accordingly the *Union Bugle* announced the fact, and urged every lover of fair play to attend.

Tom Tabor saw this notice, and he decided to be present at the great meeting. He first made a call upon Mr. Conner and obtained from him Mr. Tull's handsome watch, after which he wrote a note containing the most complimentary references to Mr. Tull himself. Its exact character, however, will appear further on in this chapter.

When Saturday evening came, it was ap-

parent that the appeals of the newspapers to the voters to turn out in full force were being responded to with a hearty good-will. The various roads leading into the little town were lined with all kinds of vehicles conveying the inhabitants of the country for miles around. It must be admitted that curiosity had at least as much to do with the large gathering as patriotism, but, whatever the cause the result was the same. The meeting was by far the largest that had been held in Mountville for years.

When Colonel Strong arrived from Philadelphia, the meeting was already in progress and was being addressed by local speakers. The Colonel was received by a committee and conducted to the hotel for a few minutes of preparation before making his appearance at the meeting.

While in his room, a boy knocked at the door and handed to him a small package accompanied by a note. The Colonel opened and read it at once.

“Colonel Putnam Strong,

“DEAR SIR :—Accompanying this you will find a slight token of the high personal esteem in which Jeremiah Tull, Esq., is held by the most prominent

citizens of this community. Feeling that there will never be a more favorable opportunity than this evening, we have ventured to so far impose upon your good nature as to ask you to make the presentation.

“It will be an entire surprise to the recipient, whose diffidence might interfere with our friendly purpose if the matter were left to his decision.

“By complying with this request you will greatly add to the pleasure of

MANY CITIZENS.

The Colonel opened the package and found that the contents corresponded beautifully with the purpose and expressions of the note. He hailed this occurrence with joy, as he had felt very serious doubts as to his ability to speak for an hour upon the subject of Jeremiah Tull. Now, however, the way was clear enough. He would put in the last twenty minutes of his time in making the presentation speech. He was all right now.

Five minutes later he was standing upon the public platform, facing the immense audience, and waiting for a break in the applause which had greeted his appearance. Then succeeded that breathless silence of expectation when every ear is intent upon the first word of the orator.

He was, beyond all question, an eloquent

speaker, and for nearly three quarters of an hour he held his audience as if by a spell. He pictured the trials and privations of the loyal men in the South during the late civil war; he spoke of the debt of gratitude that was due to them from their fellow-patriots of the North. He then spoke, with withering scorn, of any who would dare to slander the loyalty of these heroes.

At times he had the great audience wild with indignation as he denounced the cowardly crime of slander, and again it was convulsed with laughter as he told some droll story, as he alone could tell it. Then he dealt with the particular charges against Mr. Tull, and which Mr. Tull had so emphatically denied, and he showed how unsafe it always was to accept rumors of that character when they make their appearance so nearly before election day. Then—he looked at his watch.

Advancing to the front of the platform, he paused for a moment and gazed about him upon the sea of expectant faces. Everybody realized that he had something of special importance to communicate, and hardly a murmur could be heard as he resumed.

“Friends. Amid all this storm of slander

and vilification that has been raging about the head of your honorable and honored candidate for the legislature, I am glad to know that he stands unshaken in the esteem of those who most often meet him in the daily walks of life.

“I have been selected this evening as the humble instrument for expressing to him and to you the high regard in which Mr. Tull is held by his friends and neighbors. In doing this I have reason to believe that I act against the modest impulses of Mr. Tull himself, but I cannot let this knowledge stand in the way of so pleasant a duty.”

At this point the orator turned towards Mr. Tull, who was seated upon the platform. As he did so he drew from his coat pocket the neat little package which he had so recently received at the hotel.

Mr. Tull, seeing in a general way what was about to happen, arose and assumed a graceful attitude in sight of the audience. The Colonel then addressed himself to the candidate.

“Mr. Tull, on behalf of your neighbors and friends, I am permitted to place in your hands a beautiful memento of the love and

respect that has been inspired by their daily contact with yourself. May your future be ever as bright, and your honor remain as unsullied, as this burnished gold.

“May it ever remind you that honor and virtue are still regarded as more precious than gain.

“Let me beg that no sense of modesty upon your part shall induce you to decline the gift so freely—”

At this point the speaker met with a singular interruption.

With a motion as swift as the snap of a steel trap, Tull's powerful right hand swept the watch and chain from the grasp of the astonished Colonel just as he was holding them aloft and in full view of the spectators.

The fact was that Mr. Tull had not until that instant caught a fair glimpse of the promised gift. When, therefore, without a moment's warning, he became conscious that his own much lamented time-piece was dangling before his eyes and within easy reach of his hands, his impulse to resume its possession was simply irresistible. He gathered it in, much as a whirlwind might pick up

a whisp of straw which chances to lie along its course.

The action was of too violent a character to be passed over unnoticed, and its effect upon the audience may be better imagined than described. For a moment there was a lull of astonishment.

Colonel Strong did not understand the cause of the proceeding, but he instantly realized that the whole thing had been turned into a farce. He stepped quickly to the front of the platform, determined to make the best of the situation for himself.

"Gentlemen," he said, with a bland smile, "I am a stranger to the customs of your neighborhood, but I infer from what has just occurred that Mr. Tull accepts the gift. I bid you good-night."

No one could have been more amazed at Mr. Tull's impulsive action than Mr. Tull himself the instant after it occurred. For a few seconds he stood gazing stupidly at the Colonel and then turned his eyes towards the watch that was still safe within his vice-like clutch. Moved by the natural desire to undo what he had just done, he followed the orator about the platform and endeavored to have

him take back the watch and proceed with the delivery of his speech.

The Colonel, however, who seemed to be in the best possible humor, was observed to wave his hand in polite refusal of the offer. A moment later he slipped down from the platform and made his way towards the railway station.

Mr. Tull now stepped to the front and began an explanation of the accident. It was too late. The audience had up to this point been restrained by curiosity, but it was evidently not curiosity to hear Mr. Tull. When he commenced his rather incoherent remarks he was greeted by a storm of applause.

This was at first very gratifying, but he soon noticed a want of discrimination as to the points at which the applause came in. Finding his explanation rather laborious, he now turned his attention to the great question of temperance, and was again the recipient of loud and almost constant applause. The crowd at this point developed such a degree of enthusiasm that it was simply impossible to proceed, and Mr. Tull, with a rather sickly effort at imitating Colonel Strong's graceful adieu, retreated from the platform, and the meeting adjourned.

Tull was not a man of very tender sensibilities, and yet his feelings, as he and Ned drove home from the meeting, were far from pleasant. The great demonstration, from which he had expected so much, had proven a mere exhibition of his own stupidity.

He opened the *Freeman's Record* on the next Monday morning with the vague hope that, by some lucky chance, that journal might have failed to report the meeting. This was how it appeared in type:

"As our readers are already informed, an eloquent gentleman from Philadelphia had promised to address the great political meeting held in Mountville on last Saturday evening, for the purpose of attempting to evade the recent serious charges of this journal against Mr. Jeremiah Tull, a candidate for the Legislature. Undaunted by the difficulty of his task, Colonel Strong came promptly to time, and entertained the vast audience for nearly an hour. We need scarcely add that the Colonel did not attempt to answer the charges.

"There was, however, an imposing piece of fireworks which the graceful Colonel touched off at the close of the meeting. A watch presentation had been carefully arranged. Mr.

Tull and the audience were to be taken entirely by surprise, and the whole thing was to figure as a voluntary tribute to a beloved citizen.

“For the purposes of the occasion a gold watch was absolutely necessary, and here, it seems, came the rub.

“Of course, nobody who was acquainted with Mr. Tull would contribute one cent towards such a purpose, and it was hardly practicable to beg the necessary amount from strangers. Yet the watch must be had.

“The candidate proved equal to the occasion. His old watch, bearing his initials, and beautifully burnished up for use by gas light, was brought into service, and it presented a most creditable appearance.

“Unfortunately, from the want of time, or through somebody’s oversight, the true situation was not explained to Colonel Strong, and he doubtless believed that the whole thing was just what it pretended to be. As a result of this ignorance, the Colonel, during his complimentary remarks, exhibited the watch a little too freely to the audience—to many of whom it was an old acquaintance. The situation thus became embarrassing.

“At length Mr. Tull, being unable to longer endure the strain, took active measures to close the painful demonstration. This he accomplished by simply attacking the Colonel in the midst of his eloquent eulogy, and, after a short but sharp tussle, wrenching the watch from his grasp. This proceeding, although somewhat unusual, was exceedingly neat in its execution.

“The explanation offered by Mr. Tull’s friend—that he had indulged too freely in the use of stimulants—is not sufficient for the occasion. While we do not feel called upon to deny that he was somewhat under the influence of liquor, we can by no means admit that he was unconscious of the nature of his actions.

“His own explanation is better than any other—in point of ingenuity. He frankly admits that the watch was really his own—which fact was indeed known to hundreds of those present at the meeting—but says that it was stolen from him some months ago, and that he had not seen it since, until it suddenly appeared in the hands of Colonel Strong.

“What inferences Mr. Tull drew as to the character of the Colonel’s possession, is con-

clusively shown from the very prompt manner in which he proceeded to retake his stolen property. We can only regret that the two gentlemen differ so widely in their opinions of each other."

It was impossible for Mr. Tull, in the few hours that remained before the election to make any favorable change in the popular current. The charges of disloyalty had turned the voters overwhelmingly against him, and his effort to change this result had now proven a ridiculous failure.

As accidents rarely come singly, so in this case, the fact somehow leaked out that Mr. Tull, in reality, had nothing whatever to do with the new railroad which was already being built towards the Crossing.

His political stock went down more rapidly than it had risen. We may as well say here that at the election Mr. Tull was defeated by his opponent by a vote of more than five to one.

CHAPTER XXV

FINDING JOCK

IT is now time to return to our hero.

On the day appointed by Murray for imparting his singular information, both boys again entered the station-house and awaited the officer's arrival. When he saw them he laughed and invited them into the office.

"Well, gents, I reckon I know what you're after without any questions. To come to the point at once, if that little coon is in Philadelphia and can travel around, he'll be at one of two places at exactly twelve o'clock on the day after to-morrow. If he can travel fast enough he'll be at both places inside of the hour. You see there's a couple of gentlemen that every year give a big dinner just about this time to all the little 'shiners' and news-boys. They give them all the chicken that they can stuff, and I b'lieve for a fact that there aint a single darkey in the profession that don't git there on time."

"Where's the dinner to be given?" asked Carrol.

"There'll be one out at Belmont, in the park, and the other will be at Dooner's restaurant."

"Why didn't you tell us that before?"

"The time and place wasn't fixed, and, of course, I didn't know for sure that there would be any feed this year, but I believed there would, and there will be. I saw it in the paper yesterday."

The boys thanked the officer and departed, but they were both disappointed at the uncertain character of the information as to which so much had been promised.

"I don't take much stock in that kind of a point," said Carrol, in disgust.

"Nor I," replied his companion, "but I'm going to see it through, and I think there is at least a chance in it."

"Well, I wish you luck, but what will you do if you find the boy? You can't arrest him."

"Of course not, and I wouldn't if I could, for it wouldn't help me any. I've got to make friends with him somehow and try to get him to tell me what became of that money. If I

frighten him to begin with he'll close up like an oyster."

"Can I help you any in looking for him?"

"I'm afraid not. You wouldn't know him if you saw him, so I guess that somehow I will have to get to both places."

This was the plan adopted by Harry, when the time came for action. He was early at the park and had an excellent view of the guests as they arrived. They were much more prompt than are those who frequent the more fashionable circles. Only a small proportion of the boys were colored, so their inspection was not a matter requiring any very great length of time. Jock was most assuredly not among them.

The situation was one which demanded rapid transit, and Harry very sensibly took a hack and gave directions to reach Dooner's restaurant as quickly as possible. Upon his arrival he found that things there had assumed a degree of activity which promised a speedy termination to the feast.

There were probably fifty colored boys in the room. Each of the guests had been plentifully helped to chicken, and was not just then giving much attention to matters of

minor importance. Knives and forks were in no great demand, and Harry realized that it would be very difficult to recognize even familiar features, when each face was to a great extent concealed behind a large fragment of roast fowl. He was obliged to make the most of the intervals between bites.

He had passed almost around the room without finding any face that answered the description that still remained in his memory, when he suddenly found himself within arm's length of the very object of his search.

The runaway happened to be looking at him "wid de side ob his face," as Marm would have said—so Harry only caught sight of his profile. Just at the moment, Jock was engaged in the engrossing effort of trying to get his teeth into the concave portion of a chicken's back-bone. The next second he decided that the shortest way was the best, and inserted a finger into the cavity and brought out the tender morsel.

So the dusky little fugitive, whom Tull's boisterous threats had driven from his humble home on Rab's Run was at length found at one of the first restaurants of the city, dining on the fat of the land.

There was a pinched look about the face, however, which suggested that it was not always so well with him, and at this, the very moment of his success Harry felt the absurdity of supposing that the small waif before him could possibly possess the large sum of money for which he was seeking.

While our hero had no fear of recognition, he had determined to be exceedingly cautious as to the manner of making the boy's acquaintance. His hope for information depended entirely upon making a favorable impression in the first instance. His first purpose was to learn where Jock lived.

But few of the bootblacks had brought their implements of business to the feast, and Harry thought that by following and watching Jock when he was preparing to resume the practice of his profession, he would be able to discover his home. The idea proved to be correct, and he soon had the satisfaction of seeing the boy enter a dilapidated old house on Wood Street near Tenth, from which he shortly emerged with his box slung by its strap from his shoulder.

Thinking that Jock might possibly recognize him as one of the persons who had just

witnessed the dinner, and therefore be suspicious that he had followed him for the purpose of forcing his acquaintance, Harry decided to await a more favorable chance for an introduction. As, however, his only business at present was this very matter of getting upon good terms with his suspected friend, he did not indulge in any unnecessary delay.

Upon that same evening after having his supper he sauntered up towards the house from which he had seen Jock come out. He was too early by an hour, but as he was not in an impatient mood, he passed the time in leisurely walking about the neighborhood, returning frequently to have a sight of the house.

It was between nine and ten o'clock when the expected form was seen strolling up Tenth Street towards Wood. Here he turned in and Harry, who was some distance behind him, expected that he would at once disappear for the night.

For some reason of his own, however, Jock at the last moment concluded that it was too early to retire, and, turning from the door of the house, he wandered still farther up Tenth Street to Ridge Avenue. The more

brilliant store windows of this thoroughfare seemed to invite his attention, and he turned up the avenue.

His guardian followed slowly, keeping on the other side of the street, but having his charge always in view. He was just trying to decide upon his next move when an accident afforded him the opportunity which he so anxiously desired.

Jock had stopped in front of a candy store, whose window was loaded with attractive sweetmeats. He shifted his box to his left shoulder, and, shoving his remnant of a hat over on the left side of his head, he stood there scratching his wool with his right hand, and wondering how much candy went for a nickel.

As he stood there gazing upon the inviting prospect before him, a youth somewhat older than Harry, came rapidly down the avenue swinging a small cane and smoking a cigar. He had taken the cigar from his mouth to knock the accumulated ashes from the lighted end. Just then he chanced to notice the rather odd little figure at the store window he was passing. The bootblack's elevated arm exhibited a hole in the sleeve through which the black skin gleamed in the gaslight.

Scarcely checking his steps, the youth held his cigar over the exposed spot, and, touching the ash with his little finger, dropped it upon the sable, but nevertheless living flesh. There must have been some spark of fire carried with the ashes, for an instant yell of pain and wrath responded to the act.

Turning upon his tormentor, Jock delivered a kick upon the shins that at once took all of the fun out of the situation. The white boy, dropping his cigar, grabbed the bootblack by the throat. Raising his cane, he would undoubtedly have administered a sound thrashing upon the spot had not our hero crossed the street and interfered in time to prevent any further violence.

Grasping the boy's wrist, Harry forced him to loosen his hold on the tender little throat, and gave him a push that served as a satisfactory sample of what was to come, if matters were pressed. The boy, either fearing to risk the fortunes of war, or possibly realizing that he was in the wrong, made no further demonstration but moved off down the avenue.

Picking up the box that had fallen to the ground, Harry spoke as carelessly as he could.

"Come here, Cæsar. Did he pinch you much?"

"My name aint dat 'are, an' he didn' pinch me at all. He burnded me wid dat cigar."

As he spoke, Jock kicked the cigar off of the sidewalk into the gutter.

"Burned you, did he? Well, that's worse yet," and Harry showed increased interest in the wounded arm.

"That's quite a burn. Come in here and we'll see what we can do for it."

Harry opened the door of a drug-store, and Jock, still guarding the sore spot with his hand, followed him in.

"Golly, but dat am hot," said the little sufferer as the druggist examined the blister.

"Oh, I'll fix that all right in a half a minute," and he proceeded to mix a soothing lotion.

When he reappeared, Jock looked upon the application which he had prepared with some concern.

"Yer don't be gwine ter burn dat no more, does yer?"

"Of course not. What makes you ask that?"

"One ob de boys got bit wid a dog, and de

doctor he took and burned de place worser dan it war befoah."

"Oh, I see. Well, how's that strike you?" and the druggist poured the lotion upon a piece of cotton and applied it to the arm.

The effect was instantaneous and Jock's face expressed his astonishment and comfort.

"I hope ter die dis berry minit ef dat are arm don' feel better dan afore it war burnded. Dat am de truf."

Harry paid the bill and the new friends left the drug-store and turned down the avenue.

"What were you looking at when that fellow touched you off with his cigar?" asked Harry.

"Right in heah, sah. Dis am de berry same window, an' I was jes' 'zactly lookin' at dat 'are chok'late—"

"Oh, you needn't take the trouble to point out the exact piece of candy."

"Oh, dat am no trouble ter me, sah, I likes to do it. An' den you was berry kind to me, an' I's mighty glad to do you a favah. I was jes' a-lookin' at dat box a chok'late in de corner, I remember dat jes' 'zactly zif nothin' hab happen."

"That chocolate don't look very good, does it?"

"It look mighty good ter me, sah, I kin tell yer dat."

"It aint healthy, I'm afraid," said Harry, with very great seriousness.

"I hab kno'd a good many boys what ate dat kind ob candy, an' dey am all doin' berry well, sah."

Harry entered the store and cemented the friendship that had so easily been established by purchasing the box of candy. He was wise enough to deal it out in small quantities.

"What did you say your name is?" asked Harry, presently.

"It am Jock, sah, an' I'se a bootblack. Don't yer want a shine?"

"Yes, if you'll come around to my room early to-morrow morning, I'd be glad to have a shine, and I guess I'll keep the rest of this candy till you come."

"All right, sah. I'll be dar suah. Where am your house?"

Harry very readily gave Jock his address, and the two singular companions separated, well pleased at having made each other's acquaintance.

Our hero experienced a short season of doubt the next morning as to whether his

companion of the evening before would keep his word. His doubts were, however, of short duration, for Jock's footsteps were soon clearly audible as he stumped his way up the bare stairs.

"Well, Jock, how are you this morning? I wasn't quite sure that I'd see you again."

"Fer why not, sah?"

"Oh, you see I didn't know whether you'd come or not."

"Oh, yes, sah. Bootblacks an' news-boys mos' al'ays comes when dey says so, but sometimes de gen'lmen aint at de place when dey say. De bootblack am de suahest, sah."

Harry couldn't help wondering whether or not this charge against polite society was well founded. Whether good people do not sometimes measure the value of their own promises more by the social standing of the other person than by their own sense of truth. He was not at an age to spend much time in thinking on such questions, yet he fixed the little bootblack's comment in his mind, and in after years it came to help him to avoid the danger in his own case.

When Jock had finished his task, Harry paid him for the shine and was a little at a

loss to know why the boy did not seem ready to depart.

“How’s that burn this morning?” he asked by way of sociability.

“Oh, dat am all right, sah. Dat candy war mos’ pow’rful good fer de burn, sah.”

“Oh, by the way,” replied Harry, his memory being effectually jogged by the reference.

Jock was soon made happy with the remaining candy, and after promising to come again each morning, he departed.

CHAPTER XXVI

JOCK'S REVELATION

WE need not follow the various steps by which Harry and Jock became more and more confidential. We may say, however, that our hero had managed to increase the boy's confidence by incidentally letting him know that he was also a stranger in Philadelphia. Then, as if by accident, he let it be known that he had acquaintances and friends in the neighborhood of Mountville.

All this was done in such a way as not to seem to have any relation to Jock. It all came about so naturally that, instead of alarming the boy, it led him to speak very freely of his having lived in that neighborhood himself, and he soon showed an entire willingness to talk of the place. He had not, however, yet spoken of anything to the particular point that was always in Harry's mind.

This was the situation when, one morning, Jock was surprised as he ascended the stairs

to hear Harry indulging in a boisterous fit of laughter. While our hero was usually good natured, he rarely ventured upon such a demonstration as now greeted Jock's ears.

Cautiously poking his head into the room, the boy looked around for some visible cause for the excitement. There was none. Everything was dull and orderly. Harry was sitting by the window reading a newspaper—without illustrations. Of course, the paper couldn't be the source of his amusement.

The fact was that Harry was just reading the *Freeman's Record*, which Tom Tabor had sent to him. It contained the account of the meeting at Mountville. Tom's letter, of course, explained how Colonel Strong had been supplied with the watch, and taking it altogether Harry was excusable for his hilarity. He had already received and read the paper containing the charges of Mrs. Cobb, which had led to the particular demonstration in favor of Mr. Tull.

"Wat de mattah? Got nuffin' stuck in yer froat, hab yer?" queried Jock, with assumed alarm.

"Only a bone or two, Jock. But I guess I'll let them stay for the present," replied

Harry, anxious to adapt himself as much as possible to his companion's humor.

Harry now resumed his reading, while Jock arranged his "plant," and set to work. As he became absorbed in the *Record's* account of the meeting, Harry forgot the boy at his feet, and again indulged in a hearty laugh.

At length he finished the article, and folding the paper he involuntarily asked the same question which had already been propounded by Mr. Tull.

"Who on earth is Mrs. Susannah Cobb?"

"Wat's dat' 'are you'se sayin'?" demanded Jock quickly, dropping his brush in surprise.

"Who is Mrs. Susannah Cobb?" repeated the other, amused at Jock's alertness. "She's a lady who lives somewhere out towards Mountville, but it can't be very near, or I'd have heard of her myself. I think it's likely that you are not acquainted with her, Jock."

"An' I tink it am berry lik'ly dat I knows dat person berry well,—berry well, indeed, sar. Say, boss," asked the boy with sudden interest, with a little touch of anxiety, "she don' gone come to dis 'ere town, do she?"

"No, she hasn't come to town, but I guess somebody would have been glad if she had. She's kicked up a mighty lively row at home."

"Marm gon' an' kick'd up a row? Tell me all 'bout dat 'are."

Harry gave a long whistle, as he learned for the first time that the new power in politics that had so stirred up matters about the Crossing, was his old acquaintance and customer—Marm. He was glad to comply with Jock's request, and patiently read, and tried to explain to him the articles in the *Record*.

"You see, Jock, this Mrs. Susannah Cobb—"

"Jes' call her Marm, Massa Harry, and den I'll know who you means right off, widout habbin' to think her ober ebbry time."

"Well, then, Marm, told a newspaper man that Mr. Tull—he's a man that lives at Tull's Crossing—that he used to be a rebel during the war, and the newspaper man printed it all out in his paper, and that made the row."

"Well, wat about dat? S'pose he war a rebel, dey don't be cotchin' rebels any mo' now, be dey?" asked the boy, showing an inclination to sift the matter to the bottom.

"No, it isn't that. But Mr. Tull wants to be elected to the Legislature, and if he was a rebel the people won't vote for him. Don't you see?"

"Reckon I don't know much 'bout dat 'are, but I knows all 'bout Marm Cobb—I does fer suah."

A moment later he asked again, "How Marm fin' out all dat 'bout Massa Tull? Dat's wat I'd like to know."

"That's more than I can tell you, Jock. She lived down South, I believe, and I guess she knew all about it, herself."

"Nebber heard her say dat 'are 'bout Massa Tull afore, nebber," persisted Jock, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Well, I don't know much about it myself, except just what I see in the paper. She says she has the documents to prove it."

"Wat's dem?"

"Documents? Why, that means some kind of writing, perhaps letters."

"Marm can read writin', dat am de fac'," admitted the boy in confirmation of her claim.

"Has Marm got much money?" asked Harry, thinking it a favorable chance to approach the subject which was of such interest to himself.

"Lots ob it," replied Jock, promptly. "Marm's got mor'n three dollars hided away in de stump."

"How'd she happen to let you know where she kept it?"

"Oh, I jes' happen'd to watch her when she was a puttin' ob it in. She keeps a good many tings in dat ches'nut stump. Guess when Marm die she'll crawl in dat stump her own selb."

"Why don't you go back to Marm? Didn't she treat you well?"

"Oh, yes, she war mighty kin' to me mos' ob de time. Sometimes she miss de cole meat, or somefin' like dat, an' den she war a'mos' suah that I took it, when it might hab been de cat. She trus' dat cat mor'n she did Jock around de cupboard; dat war all I got ag'in Marm."

"Well, don't you feel as if you'd like to go back and see her? The cat may be dead by this time, you know."

"I aint right suah dat dat would help it any. I rather 'spect she'd lay it on to me, if anythin' was gon', ebben if the cat war dead."

"Perhaps nothing would be missing any more."

"Well, I don' know 'bout dat, sah, 'fraid dey might be. Massa Harry," asked the boy in a more serious tone, "wat war dat agin,

dat Marm says she hab dat shows 'bout Mr. Tull?"

"I don't remember. Oh, 'documents.' Was that it?"

"Dat am it. Now, how Marm ebber got any ob dem, I don' know."

"Oh, that's easy enough. They be some old newspapers or letters. Anything that's written or printed."

"You wouldn't call dem dat if dey was tore clean in two wou'd yer? All de way across de middle?"

"Why, I don't know exactly what you mean. What, torn clean in two?" said Harry, in real perplexity.

"Why, sah, ef dat paper war tore right in two pieces, so's it warn't no good for nothin', den it wouldn't be a doc'ament no more, would it?"

"Oh, yes, if anybody could read it."

"Den, sah," said Jock, with great deliberation, "dat 'are war my doc'ament 'bout Massa Tull; it war, jes' as suah as you're libbin'."

"Well, what difference would it make?" asked Harry, amused at the boy's earnestness.

"It make a hull lot ob diff'rence. 'Stead ob dat paper habin' Mrs. Susannah Cobb,

dey'd say dat de doc'ament belonged to John Calhoun Beamis—dat's de holl name ob me, sah."

Harry could scarcely believe that the boy was in earnest, but a glance at the serious little face convinced him on that point. The account which he had just heard, and the dignified references to Mrs. Cobb, had impressed the boy with the importance of the matter, and he felt certain once again that he had been robbed of his proper fame.

"Why, Jock, you aint old enough to remember anything about the war. How did you get hold of any such valuable documents?"

"I was ol' 'nough to fish dem out ob de crick—de bof ob dem. Marm nebber could hab done that—nebber."

"They can't be of much value, Jock, if they were in the creek. Very likely somebody threw them away."

"Berry likely, indeed, sah, fer I seed him do it."

"Then you ought to know that they are not very valuable."

"Dey was gibbin' him a pow'ful sight ob trouble, 'fore he frow'd dem away; I knows

dat, sah. Firs' he tried to put dem in his pocket, an' den he tried to burn dem, an' den he tor'd dem clean in two and frow'd dem into de Run. Den I jes' fished dem out—de bof ob dem."

"Why, who was it, and when was it?" asked our hero, becoming decidedly interested, as the narrative became more particular in its character.

"Dat, I don' know fer reel suah, but I'm mos' tink it war dat same man you jes' been readin' 'bout—dat Massa Tull."

Harry was attentive enough now.

"When was this, Jock; can't you remember the day?"

His questioner had arisen now, and, unconsciously to himself, was grasping Jock tightly by the shoulder. Under some circumstances this might have alarmed the boy, but as it was he hardly noticed it.

"Yes, sah, easy 'nough to remember dat day. Dat day I foun' a drown man in de crick. I neber will forget dat."

"Where did Tull get the paper?" asked Harry, faintly.

"I neber seed him git it, but I knows most

fer suah dat he took it out ob de udder man's pocket."

Harry fell heavily back in the chair from which he had risen. In an instant the whole truth, which he had never before even suspected, flashed upon him. He had never had the least knowledge or suspicion of Tull's visit to the Run on the morning of the fatal discovery. Had he been aware of that fact, he might have suspected what had become of the money, but it is quite possible that he would not have done so even then. Although he always had but a poor opinion of Mr. Tull's honesty, he would not have been prepared to lay at his door such a deliberate and cowardly crime as this.

He understood plainly enough now how it was that Jock had never shown any signs of wealth.

For several minutes he sat pale and trembling, overwhelmed by the flood of light that had so suddenly fallen upon him. His companion seeing how much he was troubled, made the best guess that was possible as to the cause. He was sitting upon his box, which he had converted into a chair by standing it upon end. Looking up into Harry's face, he

spoke with a sympathy, which, when it comes from the heart, is always welcome, whether it is offered by bootblack or prince.

“Massa Harry, war dat drown man your own fader?”

CHAPTER XXVII

MARM'S VISITOR

WHEN Harry had rallied from the first sudden shock of this revelation, he went quietly over the whole matter with Jock, and learned of the various circumstances which have already been made known to the reader. When he considered the character of Tull's action, he very easily understood why the latter had found the presence of the Ambler family so disagreeable.

He had no doubt in his own mind as to the fact that his father had actually bought and paid for the little farm, and received the deed, and that after his death he had been robbed of the deed, by the very man who had sold him the land and received the money. Harry was wise enough to know that there was a wide difference between being sure of the fact himself and being able to produce evidence that would convince a jury, if it became necessary.

He also knew that the mere fact that the deed had been torn in two would not at all destroy its value if he could only obtain possession of it. That, then, was the next thing to be done.

He questioned Jock very closely as to what Marm would be likely to do with such a piece of property. Jock's opinion was most emphatic that the document would be deposited in the "old ches'nut stump."

Fortunately our hero was so situated that he could set out upon this most important mission at once. He realized, however, that Jock was absolutely necessary to his success. With no one to point out the "old ches'nut stump," he might as well remain in Philadelphia.

Jock's affairs were not quite so easily adjusted. He found it hard to abandon a business which had been established by close application and sleepless vigilance. Even after it was all settled, Jock showed signs of wavering as he saw one of his active competitors plant his box at the feet of one of his own regular customers.

Again, the boy was not yet free from the fear of being "apperhended" by the sheriff if he returned to the neighborhood of Mount-

ville. When Harry understood the cause of his fear, he soon set him at rest.

Under it all, however, and perhaps the most powerful of all arguments in favor of going back, was the fact that Jock was really homesick. Marm's occasional fits of bad temper had never led her to any acts of cruelty that remained in his mind.

He therefore agreed to go if arrangements could be made for resuming his business promptly, if he desired to return to Philadelphia. This was done by getting Carrol to take charge of his "machin'ry," as Jock termed his outfit, during his absence.

The weather was almost wintry now, and Harry bought his traveling companion a serviceable suit of clothes, which had the effect of a disguise, as well as a protection against the cold.

All of this was accomplished within twelve hours after the conversation which had shown our hero the true state of affairs. The very next morning found the two singular travelers seated in a train that was carrying them to Mountville at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

Even at this speed it will require several

hours to reach their journey's end, and we may find it interesting to once more glance at affairs at the Crossing before they arrive.

While there had been no sudden changes in the circumstances of the people of our acquaintance, there had been a natural progress of events.

The lamp-shade industry had been about exhausted, and the occasional little sums of money which had come from this source had now ceased. Mrs. Ambler and Nellie were still at the mill, and were as welcome as ever, but they could not help feeling that their prospect was certainly not becoming brighter with the passing days.

It is to be remembered that Harry had not informed them of the reward which he had received, and their last letters told that he had lost his position with Shores & Co. As he sent no money, they naturally supposed that he had none to spare.

Of course they had not the slightest dream of his startling discovery narrated in the last chapter.

Mr. Conner's prospects were even more discouraging. Mr. Tull's political defeat had at

once increased his bitterness towards his enemies and left him at leisure to work out their punishment. He was now successfully pursuing the advantage which he had obtained by his new machinery.

While this had not resulted in the sudden loss of all his business, Mr. Conner clearly saw that it would certainly bring disaster in a very few months.

The Tull mill was undeniably turning out the better quality of flour, and it was only a question of a little time when this would be generally understood.

Taking all things into consideration, therefore, it was not a very cheerful group that gathered about the miller's supper-table upon the evening of the day that our hero, accompanied by Jock, started from Philadelphia, bound for Mountville, the "ole ches'nut stump," and home.

To deepen their gloom the sky had clouded over in the afternoon, and there was every symptom of an early snow-storm.

To Mr. Tull the misfortunes of the mill at the Falls were, of course, very welcome. Since the election he had set to work to "grind up the old Scotchman," as he expressed it, and,

as we have seen, he was meeting with ample success. His gratification at being able to lay a heavy hand upon Mr. Conner went very far towards making up for his disappointment in politics.

There was still one matter connected with the late contest which he fully intended to investigate.

On the afternoon of the election day, when it was too late to make use of the information, the editor of the *Freeman's Record* had publicly disclosed the identity of Mrs. Cobb. He had done this in a most casual manner, as if indeed it had never been a secret, yet it was a genuine surprise to Tull.

When he remembered how he had frightened the old woman with his threats of punishment to Jock, he suspected that she had taken this election as a convenient occasion for balancing accounts with him. Yet she certainly was not intelligent enough to have invented the plan without assistance. Then as to the "documents" which had been so often mentioned. How about them?

He made up his mind to wait a short time until the political excitement was over and then to sift the thing to the bottom.

So it came about that while Harry was quietly reading his newspaper and Jock was admiring himself in the looking-glass which adorned the side of the car, Mr. Tull was tying his horse to a convenient stump near the door of the little cabin on Rab's Run.

The proprietress was just then engaged in wringing out a washing. As she had no great affection for her visitor, she did not permit the pleasure of his company to interfere with her business. She continued her occupation during the conversation which followed.

Mr. Tull knew that nothing could be gained at the present time by threats, so he adopted his most persuasive manner.

"Good mornin', ma'am. It's a little cold to be washin' out out o' doors, aint it?"

"Mornin' to *you*, sah. We all gits lef' out in der cold sometimes, don' we, sah?" responded Marm, with a shrewd glance at her visitor.

"Oh, you know who I be, do you? I wasn't sure as you knowd me," responded Mr. Tull. He didn't particularly relish this prompt reference to his own defeat at the election, especially as it came from the very one who had "lef' " him out in the cold.

"Yes, sah; I hab de 'streme pleasure of knowin' you. You comed hyar onct ter see 'bout my Jock."

"That's a fact. Did you ever see that boy afterwards?"

"No, sah. Did yer eber happen to catch him yer ownself?"

"No, I never did. The fact is, Mrs. Cobb," Mr. Tull became confidential, "it kind o' seemed to me that day that you didn't want the boy caught, so I jes' told the other men not to bother about it."

"Dat were termengus kind ob you, sah. I guess I neber forget dat fabor."

Mr. Tull thought there was something a little suspicious in the old woman's tone, but as he looked at her, she was proceeding to wring the last drop of water from the garment in her hands in a way that convinced him that she was surely very much in earnest.

"Am der anyfing I kin do fer you dis mornin', sah?"

She shook out the piece of linen and tossed it across the line as she put the question.

"Oh, no. I jus' happened to be ridin' down along the Run, an' I thought I'd stop an' see you, that was all."

"Yes, sah. I thought p'rhaps you was goin' to change yo' washerwoman. I kin wash 'em pretty clean, sah. Ise been a long time in dis hyar business."

"I'll remember you if I do. By the way, Mrs. Cobb, aint you the person the *Record* talked so much about before the election ; that knew so much about me?"

"Yes, sah ; I am dat lady. So you heered 'bout dat, did yer?"

"Well, I reckon I did," responded Tull, with some evidences of growing wrath.

The next second he realized that he must continue to be agreeable if he hoped to get any favors from the old woman. He would have liked to held her head in her own tub of soap-suds until old scores were wiped out, but that would not have solved the problem which he had on hand.

"Wall, I aint much complaint to make 'bout politics, but I'd like mighty well to see that document the *Record* said so much about."

"Dat's private, dat is. Won't show dat docament to nobody."

"Oh, wall, of course, it's your matter an' not mine. I only thought I be willing to give

a dollar or two just to have a look at the thing."

This casual mention of a possible profit to herself did not fail to produce its effect upon Marm. She made no immediate reply but continued to hang out her washing. Presently she spoke again.

"Dat was berry kind ob you, sah, to took sich trouble fer dat boy Jock, an' jes' fer dat I b'lieve I'd let yer look at dat docament, fer only five dollahs if it war right so's I could git hold ob it. I re'lly b'lieve I would, sah, fer suah."

"Why, you haven't lost it, have you?" asked Tull in real concern.

"Oh, no, sah, it's all right. But it aint berry close to hyar, sah, dat's all."

"How soon could you git it?" inquired Tull.

"Look hyar, Massa Tull, you don't mean fer to run away wid it, does you?" asked Marm, with a sudden air of suspicion.

"No, of course not. All I want is just to read it over."

"Well, sah, I b'lieve I could hab dat 'are docament right in dat house dare by eight o'clock dis berry night. Re'lly b'lieve dat could be done, sah."

"You couldn't do it any sooner? You couldn't do it now, could you?"

"Oh, laws, no, sah. Couldn't possible. Not no way, sah."

"Wall, then you make it a p'int to have it here by a quarter arter eight to-night. Here's a dollar to help you to remember it, and I'll give you four more just like it when I see the paper."

"Yes, sah. Thank you, sah. Will I git de money jes' afore, or jes' arter, you'se seed de paper? Sometimes dat do make a dif'rence, sah."

"Oh, that'll be all right. I'll pay you before if you want it, only don't forget to have the paper."

"I'll hab it hyar fer suah, sah."

Marm's manner was so decided that Tull understood her promise to be absolute, so bidding her good-bye, he mounted his horse and rode off.

"I kind o' reckon I know how to manage the female sex, anyhow. The old hen wasn't so hard to handle as I was afeared. What on arth has she got hold of, with my name in it? Like as not it's an old election poster. Wall, I'll know to-night, anyway."

When the horseman was out of sight, the old colored woman proceeded to dry her hands upon her apron as a preparation for a full expression of her views.

"Wonder wat's de matter wid dat man. Why him take so much trouble to pertend he jus' come ober ter see me, when he come jus' to see dat paper.

"Guess ef it am worf five dollahs a look, I'd better hab dat paper put in a glass case, and den I'll trabble 'round wid it, like I was Missus Barnum.

"If he tries any ob his tricks about carry-in' of de paper away, der'll be a site ob tr'uble dis berry night, I kin tell yer dat."

After biting the silver dollar to make sure of its character, she put it back in her pocket and resumed her occupation.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AT LAST

UPON reflection Harry decided that it would be wise to keep the return of himself and Jock entirely secret, at least until after they had examined the old stump, as to the contents of which they were now so hopeful. With this purpose in view, they left the cars at the first station below Mountville, and traveled slowly along the road which led towards Rab's Run.

They regulated their steps so as to reach the neighborhood of the cabin at about dusk. The sun was obscured by clouds and the air felt very much as if a snow-storm was at hand.

When the travelers reached the woods, Jock became the guide. He knew the locality almost by inches.

Instead of going directly to the cabin, he led Harry to a point which must have been an eighth of a mile from the house. Here he ap-

proached a clump of young trees and brambles which together formed a dense spot of, possibly, a hundred feet in diameter.

After walking partly around this spot, Jock discovered the entrance for which he was in search. Leaving Harry seated on a log behind one of the larger trees, the colored boy cautiously pushed the brambles aside, and proceeded along the obscure pathway towards the stump, which he knew was in the middle of this little thicket.

Harry could distinctly hear the twigs snapping beneath Jock's footsteps as he proceeded upon his short journey. When the sounds ceased he felt as if a very important point had been reached. He knew that the boy must be examining Marm's treasure house, and he reflected that even at that moment the precious deed was probably in his hands.

He awaited impatiently the renewal of the sound which would indicate that the outward journey had begun.

As he sat motionless, occupied with these thoughts, he was suddenly startled by an apparition. It was not at all like the ghosts of which we read. Instead of possessing the light and airy qualities belonging

to that family, it was very substantial and very black.

It had approached the thicket, however, with such caution that Harry saw nothing of it until it was immediately in front of the entrance into which Jock had glided not five minutes before.

Our hero had scarcely time to collect his thoughts when the new arrival also entered the thicket and disappeared from sight. The sounds of footsteps were again audible, and led directly towards the centre of the thicket.

Harry now hastened to the mouth of the pathway and listened.

Suddenly he heard some exclamation of alarmed surprise, then a dull, heavy sound such as is sometimes produced by striking the open hand against a ripe watermelon.

Then came a yell which would have done credit to the most vigorous of cats—only, no cat ever succeeded in executing such a remarkable trill as issued from the thicket. It was evident that the body from which the noise proceeded was in a state of violent motion.

The sounds of angry reproach and earnest expostulation were now heard, and these in

turn were succeeded by the noise of human footsteps.

The procession was evidently in motion, and Harry at once returned to his station behind the tree.

Presently the forms of Jock and Marm emerged from the path. Marm's right hand grasped her prisoner's right ear and so much of his woolly hair as went to make up a handful. It was clear that her first hasty hold had proven entirely satisfactory—to herself—for she had not relaxed it.

She kept her prisoner directly in front of her, and nearly at arm's length. In her left hand she carried a package, whose form Harry was not able to make out, but his imagination assured him of its character.

He could hear enough of the conversation to know that Jock had been recognized, but he dared not follow close enough to hear all that was said. The march was a brisk one, and the colored woman had soon deposited her prisoner in a place of safety.

She had scarcely entered the house when Harry approached the window. A pane of glass was missing, so that he was able to hear, as well as see, what took place within.

The lamp was already lighted, and Marm at once turned it up.

Preparations for tea had been nearly completed. The table was set, and the tea-kettle was singing cheerfully on the stove.

“Now, you imperdent little niggah, you sit right down dar.”

Harry both saw and heard the invitation accepted.

Marm now bolted the door to prevent Jock's escape, and looked about for a suitable place to deposit her precious package. It was simply a bundle of paper, not very neatly folded, and was tied around and around with several thicknesses of twine.

It was not in the form in which legal documents are usually folded, but our hero nevertheless felt confident that it was the deed which had belonged to his father.

Marm first laid it upon the table. Then, with a look of suspicion towards the trembling Jock, she again took it up.

At last she mounted on a stool, and reaching up, deposited the bundle upon the top of the cupboard. Two Jocks could not have reached it. The cupboard stood not far from the window, and Harry had an excellent view of the package in its new resting-place.

"Dar, now, I guess yo' won't rob your bes' fren' no moah to-night."

"Marm, dat 'are aint your'n, nohow. I foun' it my own self."

"How could dat 'ere be you'n? You couldn't read it. It nebber could be no good ter you."

"Well, I foun' it, anyway," whimpered Jock.

"Guess, pickaninny, yo', don' know how much dat 'are am worf. In jes' fifteen minutes a gen'aman's a comin' hyar an' he's gowin' to pay foah dollahs jes' to let him read dat 'are onct. What do you think ob dat, hey?"

Jock stopped chewing the elm twig that he had been holding in his hand, and gazed in astonishment towards the bundle that was just visible over the edge of the tall cupboard.

"Who am dat gen'aman, Marm?"

"It am dat Massa Tull, an' I tell yer he's mighty partic'lar to see dat paper."

Harry's alarm at this information may be readily imagined. To think of the deed, which was now plainly within his sight, and not more than eight feet from his hand, being again restored to the man who believed that he had already destroyed it!

He determined not to let it go without an effort. He slipped away from the window, and was absent for what, when he thought how precious the moments were becoming, seemed a long time. Upon his return he brought with him a long hickory sapling, trimmed smooth through most of its length, but with a fork at the small end, formed by two sharp twigs.

Selecting a moment when the old colored woman had turned her back, Harry quietly inserted the pole through the broken window. The position of the bundle was favorable enough for his purpose, and he felt sure that he could get an excellent hold on the twine if Marm were not so exceedingly active.

It must, however, be admitted that his chances would have been most desperate had it not been for a singular accident which just then occurred, and for a few minutes looked as if it might cost Jock his life.

The youthful prisoner caught sight of the hickory pole before it had advanced very far upon its journey. He must have been greatly startled by the sight, for he was instantly attacked with a most violent fit of choking.

Giving a howl of agony to begin with, he

placed his hands alternately upon his mouth, his stomach, and his back, at the same time making desperate efforts to eject something from his throat. The six-inch twig, which Marm had but a moment before seen him gnawing, had disappeared.

The old woman's wrath at once gave way to alarm. Seizing the unfortunate boy, she first inspected his throat, but finding nothing there to account for his sufferings, she stretched him face downwards across a stool, and pounded him with a vigor that threatened to displace his vital organs. For some time his case seemed hopeless, and indeed, in view of his sufferings, one could only wish him a speedy relief, no matter how it might come.

This affliction occurred in the part of the room which was exactly the farthest from the broken window. Marm's entire attention was, of course, directed to the little sufferer.

Now Harry, with remarkable heartlessness, went right on with his own project in the very midst of Jock's most acute sufferings.

While Marm was forcing Jock to open his mouth that she might extract the suicidal stick, Harry was getting a safe twist on the twine with his forked sapling. While Jock's

ribs were being thumped most vigorously by his powerful physician, the bundle was noiselessly lifted from its high position and steadily lowered towards the broken window, through which it passed just at the moment when Jock's agony must have been most intense.

Determined to save the boy at all hazards, Marm now seized him by his coat collar with one hand, and by the most convenient portion of his new pantaloons, with the other. Raising him from the stool across which he had been extended, she proceeded to give him a most thorough shaking.

This proved to be exactly what was needed. The very first shake brought forth the fatal stick. True, it came from Jock's sleeve instead of his throat, but Marm was too much excited to notice little differences of that sort. The patient at once indicated his own decided opinion that no further treatment was necessary.

"Dar, honey, guess yo' feel bettah after dat," and she adjusted the much-shaken boy to the stool again in his natural position. She had saved Jock's life, and the remnant of her first anger had wholly disappeared.

The boy's recovery was remarkably rapid.

His throat had evidently suffered no lasting injury, for, in five minutes after being relieved, he was, at Marm's urgent request, devouring the best contents of her cupboard. He was clearly out of danger.

A few moments later, the sound of an approaching horseman caused Jock to grab half a mince pie and hastily retire to the attic. In due time, Harry saw Marm unlock the door to the portly form of Jeremiah Tull.

"Wall, Mrs. Cobb, I reckon I'm on time."

"Yes, sah. I'd be mighty right down glad ef the gent'men I washes fer was as prompt as you be, sah. It's a awful good failin', sah."

As he entered the room Tull had glanced about in search of the expected paper, and his face indicated a little impatience at not seeing it.

"Wall, how about that there paper? You haint forgot it, I hope."

"Oh, no, sah, no danger ob dat. You'se *already* paid a dollah, and dar's only four moah dollahs comin'. O' course, I remembers all dat."

Seeing that the financial part of the business would have to be settled first, Tull

promptly handed over the four dollars. After carefully examining each coin to make sure that nobody had been passing spurious coin upon her visitor, Marm deliberately proceeded upstairs. She wisely intended to place the money out of danger in case the contents of the "document" should not be as satisfactory to Mr. Tull as he might be expecting.

That gentleman awaited her return with the full expectation that she would bring the mysterious paper in her hand. When she appeared without it, his countenance began to show his dissatisfaction, and Marm, having now secured her money, had no reason for longer delay.

Mounting the stool, she confidently clutched the vacant space so lately occupied by her valuable prize. It was not there! She hastily moved her hand to the right. All in vain! The deed had vanished!

For a moment Marm stood there, with her hand resting listlessly upon the top of the cupboard, and her whole appearance indicating dumb amazement. Then a look of shrewd intelligence flashed across her dusky face.

Turning suddenly upon her visitor, she

caught him with a sneer on his lips. She saw through the whole scheme in an instant. Tull had discovered and stolen the package while she was upstairs, and would now have the impudence to demand the return of his money upon the plea that she never had any such paper. The very boldness of the plan set her blood to boiling.

To Tull, also, the whole operation was too clear to need explanation. This woman and the editor of the *Freeman's Record* had, between them, gotten up the whole villainous story about himself. After ruining his political fortunes, the woman had seen the further chance to make money out of him by her promise to exhibit the paper, which, of course, had never existed. Naturally, she had to make some pretext for not producing it at last, and she might as well look on top of the cupboard, as in the oven, or anywhere else. No wonder she took the money upstairs before going through this absurd search.

We need hardly add that Jeremiah Tull did not propose to be robbed as well as slandered. Marm, nevertheless, got in the first word.

"You call you'self a gent'eman. You mis'able ol' cheat. Gib me dat docaments dis berry minute. Yo' heah me?"

"It won't work, old gal, and you might as well come down fust as last. Climb upstairs after them five dollars, an' don't try this kind o' game ag'in or you'll roost in the lock-up afore yo' know it."

"Han' ober dat five dollahs? I rader guess not. You jes' bring out dat doc'ament, an' don't try no moah ob dat foolin'."

When Tull realized that the old woman persisted in charging him with theft, as well as in keeping his money, his anger overflowed. He advanced towards Marm, shaking his fist in the most savage manner.

"You black pickpocket, if you don't get that money in half a minute, I'll wring your skinny old neck for you."

Marm's eyes flashed with anger, as she heard these uncomplimentary words and beheld the advancing foe.

After having deliberately robbed her, this man was actually about to chastise her in her own house. It was too much! Marm's days of slavery were long since past, and she had become a firm believer in the maxim that "they have rights, who dare maintain them." Seizing the steaming tea-kettle from the stove, she turned upon her arrogant visitor.

With wonderful promptness, Tull adapted himself to the changed circumstances, and sprang towards the door. His speed, upon this occasion, was very creditable to a man of his weight, but, unfortunately, the door was closed and Marm's aim was accurate. Just as he had dashed the door open, the straight line of his retreat was intercepted by the swift and graceful semicircle of scalding water from the spout of the tea-kettle.

It struck him about "midships," as the sailors would say, and brought out a howl which startled Jock in the attic overhead, and even reached Harry, who was by this time well along on the road that led up the Run.

The old negress followed her departing guest to the door. She could see him dimly as he scrambled into his saddle, and distinctly hear his references to herself.

"Him's a pretty tuf ole bird, but I reckon dat'll kind o' loosen de tail fedders. *Him wring my neck !*"



IT BROUGHT OUT A HOWL WHICH STARTLED JOCK IN THE ATTIC ABOVE

CHAPTER XXIX

HOME AGAIN

WHILE the events just narrated were taking place at the little cabin in the woods, the household of our friend the miller was gathering about the evening meal. For several weeks there had been a noticeable change in the manner of the miller himself, which had more or less affected the other members of the family.

His cheerful voice was heard less frequently than before, and then only when something required him to speak. He had not become morose, but it was evident that his own troubles were pressing so closely upon him that he had but little time for pleasant thoughts.

He had passed the age at which a man, defeated in one occupation, could turn himself to another. He was a miller, and as such he must succeed or fail. He seemed now to have

failed—not so much by reason of any defect in himself, as by the crushing power of a wealthy and vindictive rival.

The consciousness of his failure was heavy upon him this cold November night, as, sitting at the head of the table, he silently performed the simple duties of host. Hardly a word was uttered during the meal.

Besides sharing keenly in Mr. Conner's misfortunes, Mrs. Ambler and Nellie had some additional reasons of their own for wearing serious faces.

Harry's letters had been less frequent during the last few weeks, and those that came had somehow seemed as if it was his effort to say as little as possible. This was so different from his usual frank and open manner that his mother was greatly troubled.

Altogether it was not a cheerful group of faces that gathered about the evening lamp when the supper-table had been cleared. Mrs. Ambler held an open book before her and tried to read.

Mrs. Conner was plying her needle, while her husband sat gazing into the open fire-place, in which a wood fire was crackling away and doing its best to make things cheerful.

At length Mrs. Ambler laid aside her book and spoke.

"Mr. Conner, don't you think we'd all feel better if we had a good full talk about our troubles? I do."

The miller was taken by surprise for a moment, but he soon saw Mrs. Ambler's kindly purpose, and he yielded to her suggestion.

"Luke enow, like enow. But there's not much I can say after all. It's only that after a lifetime o' work I can na see the way to pay two hundred dollars o' debt, or if that were paid, I can na see how the living's to come."

"Is that the money you borrowed when the road up the grade was built?"

"The very same. I have but fifty to pay two hundred, and if any one knows where the rest is to come from—why I'd like to have them to tell me."

"Oh, I can tell you all about that," rang out a cheerful and familiar voice, as Harry Ambler threw his arms about his mother's neck. The snow and the wind had prevented the sound of his light footsteps from reaching the group in the miller's sitting-room, and

the traveler, finding the outer door unlocked, had entered the hallway and had overheard the few words that had been spoken.

He received such a welcome as only a loving mother and sister can give.

When the first excitement of his arrival was over, he began very deliberately, and told of the various exploits and discoveries which have formed the subject of the preceding chapters.

The little audience, gathered there within the cheerful light of the open fire, listened with ever-increasing wonder to the boy's narrative. Nothing that he told them would be new to us, yet the reader can easily understand with what awe and gratitude Mrs. Ambler received from his hands the deed—scorched, water-stained, and torn in half—yet potent in law to assure to the widow and children the home for which Parker Ambler had laid down his very life. It had, indeed, been so far from her thoughts that it came to her now almost as a gift from the world beyond.

The next morning our hero and Mr. Conner visited the county-seat, which was a half

day's journey from the Falls. They had wisely concluded to learn exactly what the legal rights of the case were, before themselves taking any important step.

From the worthy lawyer whose advice they sought, they learned that Mrs. Ambler and her children were, beyond dispute, the owners of the farm ; that the mill, with all that was part of it, was likewise theirs ; that Tull, having made the improvements with the full knowledge that the land was not his own, could neither remove any portion of them, nor claim compensation for their loss.

That being the law, it became a matter for their own consideration as to how they should act. Having recorded the deed, they returned home, and Harry, Nellie, and Mrs. Ambler held a long and earnest consultation. The conclusion that they finally reached was shown by the occurrences of the next afternoon.

Once more Harry Ambler and Tom Tabor might have been seen opening the gate of the still vacant cottage. They did not pause in the yard, but passed through it to the great mill that loomed up by the side of the stream beyond.

Mr. Tull and Ned witnessed their approach with feelings of surprise, unmixed with pleasure. They both supposed that Harry was a hundred miles away in Philadelphia.

"Why, dad, there's Ambler, an' he's step-pin' along jes' 'zif he owned the place."

"That's 'bout his style, an' I've a mighty good notion to give 'Brock' a kind o' hint to klar the premises o' strangers."

By this time the boys were within hearing distance and in a moment more they entered the mill.

"Wall, gents," said the elder Tull, with mock politeness, "what kin a humble miller do fer you this fine afternoon?"

"Mr. Tull, how much did this mill cost you?" asked Harry, without paying any attention to the other's question.

"Wall, what business is that o' your'n, I'd like to know?"

"I'll tell you. We have decided to deed the mill and the land that it stands on to Mr. Conner. Mr. Conner will pay you a reasonable price for the machinery, not because you are entitled to it, but because he prefers to do so. He will make his payments in yearly parts as he finds it convenient. That is the reason that I asked the cost."

Ned, who knew nothing about the deed to Mr. Ambler, laughed outright at the preposterous suggestions.

"What on arth be you tryin' to git at with yer talk about deedin' away other people's land. Be yo' mad?" asked Mr. Tull.

"There is nothing to make a secret of in the matter at present. The fact is, Mr. Tull, that that deed to my father which you tore up and threw into Rab's Run, was fished out again within ten minutes from the time you threw it in, and is now on record. You will easily understand the rest."

When Harry began the last statement, Mr. Tull had been standing arrogantly before him, puffed out with insolent pride, and looking every inch the self-possessed and arbitrary man that he was. He had been idly playing with a handful of grain, which he was pouring from one hand into the other.

When Harry had finished, Tull was resting against a grain-bin which he was clutching with one hand for support. His other hand hung by his side and the wheat was trickling down between his lax and nerveless fingers. His pale face and drooping jaw told how forcible had been the shock to his nervous

system. There was not a remaining symptom of his usual threat and bluster.

He realized that pronouncing the whole thing a falsehood would not take the deed off the record. He did, however, make one feeble effort at self-defense.

"O' course I al'ays meant to pay back that 'are money. I'll do it to-day."

"No. The money is yours. We are satisfied with my father's purchase, just as it stands."

Our narrative is nearly done.

A few days later saw the little family back in their rightful home.

In due time the Connors moved down to Ambler's Station, as it is now called, and took possession of the mill that had once threatened their destruction. They still own it.

The land about the station has so increased in value that Mrs. Ambler is now considered quite wealthy.

Her change of circumstances has, however, made no difference in the bearing of the family towards those about them.

Harry has taken pleasure in keeping up the friendships that he formed during the few

eventful months that his family were "paupers," as he can now laughingly describe them.

George Carrol often comes out for a week or ten days' vacation, and Harry always drops into Shores & Co.'s store when in the city, and has a pleasant word with those whose acquaintance he formed under such singular circumstances.

Harry and Tom Tabor find each other as agreeable companions in their early manhood as in the days of our narrative. In friendly conversation between them Tom often fixes a past event by saying that it was before "you stole Tull's watch."

The passing years brought still other adventures to the two friends, but these were in no way related to the incidents of our present narrative.

Tull found the neighborhood too warm for him, and he and Ned departed within a week after the scene at the new mill. Bates, acting for his absent client, sold his property at the Crossing, and received Mr. Conner's annual payments.

Bates, himself, remained at Mountville, and his share in the conspiracy was not known

until, years afterwards, upon his death-bed, he felt moved to reveal it, and so enabled us to present the whole singular history to our readers.

On one corner of what was once the little farm, conveniently near the station, stands a comfortable cabin. It is the gift of Harry Ambler to Marm and Jock. The latter has long ago outgrown his boyish name. By the efforts of Mrs. Ambler and Nellie, he was placed in the way of getting an education, and the old order of things is now reversed. Marm depends upon him for her reading. He has long been in the employ of Mr. Conner at the new mill, and in many ways has had occasion to rejoice in his good luck as a fisherman in Rab's Run.

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